

PENGUIN BOOKS

PI 1

PLAYS PLEASANT

BERNARD SHAW

OTHER SHAW PLAYS IN PENGUIN'S

Androcles and the Lion

The Apple Cart

Back to Methuselah

The Doctor's Dilemma

Major Barbara

Man and Superman

The Millionairess

Plays Unpleasant

Pygmalion

Saint Joan

Three Plays for Puritans

[PLAYS PLEASANT

ARMS AND THE MAN

CANDIDA

THE MAN OF DESTINY

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

BY

BERNARD SHAW



LONDON: PUBLISHED BY

Penguin Books Ltd, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England
Penguin Books Pty Ltd, Ringwood, Victoria, Australia

Plays Pleasant first published 1898

Published in Penguin Books 1946

Reprinted 1949, 1951, 1953 (twice), 1955, 1956, 1958, 1959, 1961 (twice), 1963, 1964

Arms and The Man first produced in London, 1894, in New York, 1894 (the first Shaw play produced in America)

Candida produced in London (privately) 1900, (publicly) 1904; in New York, 1903, in Brussels, 1907 (the first performance of a Shaw play in French); in Paris, 1908 (the first Shaw performance in France)

The Man of Destiny first produced at Croydon, 1897 in London 1901; in New York, 1899, in Berlin, 1904

You Never Can Tell first produced in London (publicly) and in New York, 1905, in Berlin, 1906, in Paris, 1913

Made and printed in Great Britain
by R & R Clark Ltd
Edinburgh

Set in Monotype Baskerville

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Please note that business connected with Bernard Shaw's plays is now in the hands of THE INCORPORATED SOCIETY OF AUTHORS, PLAYWRIGHTS AND COMPOSERS at 84 Drayton Gardens, London, S.W.10 (Telephone, Fremantle 6642/3), to which all inquiries and applications for licences to perform should be addressed and performing fees paid. Dates and places of contemplated performance must be precisely specified in all applications. Accounts showing the receipts at each performance should accompany payments.

This book is sold subject to the condition
that it shall not, by way of trade, be lent,
re-sold, hired out, or otherwise disposed
of without the publisher's consent,
in any form of binding or cover
other than that in which
it is published

Contents

PREFACE	7
ARMS AND THE MAN <i>An Anti-romantic Comedy</i>	17
CANDIDA <i>A Mystery</i>	91
THE MAN OF DESTINY <i>A Fictitious Paragraph of History</i>	161
YOU NEVER CAN TELL <i>A Comedy</i>	209

Italian cities, for the art it had to shew me was the work of living men, whereas modern Italy had, as far as I could see, no more connection with Giotto than Port Said has with Ptolemy. Now I am no believer in the worth of any mere taste for art that cannot produce what it professes to appreciate. When my subsequent visit to Italy found me practising the playwright's craft, the time was ripe for a modern pre-Raphaelite play. Religion was alive again, coming back upon men, even upon clergymen, with such power that not the Church of England itself could keep it out. Here my activity as a Socialist had placed me on sure and familiar ground. To me the members of the Guild of St Matthew were no more 'High Church clergymen,' Dr Clifford no more 'an eminent Nonconformist divine,' than I was to them 'an infidel.' There is only one religion, though there are a hundred versions of it. We all had the same thing to say, and though some of us cleared our throats to say it by singing revolutionary lyrics and republican hymns, we thought nothing of singing them to the music of Sullivan's *Onward Christian Soldiers* or Haydn's *God Preserve the Emperor*.

Now unity, however desirable in political agitations, is fatal to drama, for every drama must present a conflict. The end may be reconciliation or destruction; or, as in life itself, there may be no end; but the conflict is indispensable. no conflict, no drama. Certainly it is easy to dramatize the prosaic conflict of Christian Socialism with vulgar Unsociatism. for instance, in *Widowers' Houses*, the clergyman, who does not appear on the stage at all, is the real antagonist of the slum landlord. But the obvious conflicts of unmistakeable good with unmistakeable evil can only supply the crude drama of villain and hero, in which some absolute point of view is taken, and the dissentients are treated by the dramatist as enemies to be piously glorified or indignantly vilified. In such cheap wares I do not deal. Even in my unpleasant propagandist plays I have allowed every person his or her own point of view, and have, I hope, to the full extent of my understanding of him, been as sympathetic with Sir George Crofts as with any of the more genial and popular characters in the present volume. To distil the quintessential drama from pre-Raphaelitism, medieval or modern, it must be shewn at its best in conflict with the first broken, nervous, stumbling attempts to formulate its own revolt against itself as it develops into something higher. A coherent explanation of any such revolt, addressed intelligibly and prosaically to the intellect, can only come when the work is done, and indeed *done with* that is to say, when the development, accomplished, admitted, and assimilated, is a story of yesterday. Long before any such understanding can be reached, the eyes of men

begin to turn towards the distant light of the new age. Discernible at first only by the eyes of the man of genius, it must be focussed by him on the speculum of a work of art, and flashed back from that into the eyes of the common man. Nay, the artist himself has no other way of making himself conscious of the ray: it is by a blind instinct that he keeps on building up his masterpieces until their pinnacles catch the glint of the unrisen sun. Ask him to explain himself prosaically, and you find that he 'writes like an angel and talks like poor Poll,' and is himself the first to make that epigram at his own expense. John Ruskin has told us clearly enough what is in the pictures of Carpaccio and Bellini: let him explain, if he can, where we shall be when the sun that is caught by the summits of the work of his favorite Tintoretto, of his aversion Rembrandt, of Mozart, of Beethoven and Wagner, of Blake and of Shelley, shall have reached the valleys. Let Ibsen explain, if he can, why the building of churches and happy homes is not the ultimate destiny of Man, and why, to thrill the unsatisfied younger generations, he must mount beyond it to heights that now seem unspeakably giddy and dreadful to him, and from which the first climbers must fall and dash themselves to pieces. He cannot explain it: he can only shew it to you as a vision in the magic glass of his artwork, so that you may catch his presentiment and make what you can of it. And this is the function that raises dramatic art above imposture and pleasure hunting, and enables the playwright to be something more than a skilled liar and pandar.

Here, then, was the higher but vaguer and timider vision, the incoherent, mischievous, and even ridiculous unpracticalness, which offered me a dramatic antagonist for the clear, bold, sure, sensible, benevolent, salutarly shortsighted Christian Socialist idealism. I availed myself of it in *Candida*, the drunken scene in which has been much appreciated, I am told, in Aberdeen. I purposely contrived the play in such a way as to make the expenses of representation insignificant, so that, without pretending that I could appeal to a very wide circle of playgoers, I could reasonably sound a few of our more enlightened managers as to an experiment with half a dozen afternoon performances. They admired the play generously, indeed, I think that if any of them had been young enough to play the poet, my proposal might have been acceded to, in spite of many incidental difficulties. Nay, if only I had made the poet a cripple, or at least blind, so as to combine an easier disguise with a larger claim for sympathy, something might have been done. Richard Mansfield, who had, with apparent ease, made me quite famous in America by his productions of my plays, went so far as

to put the play actually into rehearsal before he would confess himself beaten by the physical difficulties of the part. But they did beat him, and *Candida* did not see the footlights until my old ally the Independent Theatre, making a propagandist tour through the provinces with *A Doll's House*, added *Candida* to its repertory, to the great astonishment of its audiences.

In an idle moment in 1895 I began the little scene called *The Man of Destiny*, which is hardly more than a bravura piece to display the virtuosity of the two principal performers.

In the meantime I had devoted the spare moments of 1896 to the composition of two more plays, only the first of which appears in this volume. *You Never Can Tell* was an attempt to comply with many requests for a play in which the much paragraphed 'brilliance' of *Arms and The Man* should be tempered by some consideration for the requirements of managers in search of fashionable comedies for West End Theatres. I had no difficulty in complying, as I have always cast my plays in the ordinary practical comedy form in use at all the theatres, and far from taking an unsympathetic view of the popular preference for fun, fashionable dresses, a little music, and even an exhibition of eating and drinking by people with an expensive air, attended by an if-possible-comic waiter, I was more than willing to shew that the drama can humanize these things as easily as they, in the wrong hands, can dehumanize the drama. But as often happens it was easier to do this than to persuade those who had asked for it that they had indeed got it. A chapter in Cyril Maude's history of the Haymarket Theatre records how the play was rehearsed there, and why I withdrew it. And so I reached the point at which, as narrated in the preface to the *Unpleasant* volume, I resolved to avail myself of my literary expertness to put my plays before the public in my own way.

It will be noticed that I have not been driven to this expedient by any hostility on the part of our managers. I will not pretend that the modern actor-manager's talent as player can in the nature of things be often associated with exceptional critical insight. As a rule, by the time a manager has experience enough to make him as safe a judge of plays as a Bond Street dealer is of pictures, he begins to be thrown out in his calculations by the slow but constant change of public taste, and by his own growing conservatism. But his need for new plays is so great, and the few accredited authors are so little able to keep pace with their commissions, that he is always apt to overrate rather than to underrate his discoveries in the way of new pieces by new authors. An original work by a man of genius like Ibsen may, of course, baffle him as it baffles many professed critics;

but in the beaten path of drama no unacted works of merit, suitable to his purposes, have been discovered, whereas the production, at great expense, of very faulty plays written by novices (not 'backers') is by no means an unknown event. Indeed, to anyone who can estimate, even vaguely, the complicated trouble, the risk of heavy loss, and the initial expense and thought, involved by the production of a play, the ease with which dramatic authors, known and unknown, get their works performed must needs seem a wonder.

Only, authors must not expect managers to invest many thousands of pounds in plays, however fine (or the reverse), which will clearly not attract perfectly commonplace people. Playwriting and theatrical management, on the present commercial basis, are businesses like other businesses, depending on the patronage of great numbers of very ordinary customers. When the managers and authors study the wants of these customers, they succeed; when they do not, they fail. A public-spirited manager, or an author with a keen artistic conscience, may choose to pursue his business with the minimum of profit and the maximum of social usefulness by keeping as close as he can to the highest marketable limit of quality, and constantly feeling for an extension of that limit through the advance of popular culture. An unscrupulous manager or author may aim simply at the maximum of profit with the minimum of risk. These are the opposite poles of our system, represented in practice by our first rate managements at the one end, and the syndicates which exploit pornographic farces at the other. Between them there is plenty of room for most talents to breathe freely; at all events there is a career, no harder of access than any cognate career, for all qualified playwrights who bring the manager what his customers want and understand, or even enough of it to induce them to swallow at the same time a great deal that they neither want nor understand, for the public is touchingly humble in such matters.

For all that, the commercial limits are too narrow for our social welfare. The theatre is growing in importance as a social organ. Bad theatres are as mischievous as bad schools or bad churches, for modern civilization is rapidly multiplying the class to which the theatre is both school and church. Public and private life become daily more theatrical: the modern Kaiser, Dictator, President or Prime Minister is nothing if not an effective actor, all newspapers are now edited histrionically, and the records of our law courts shew that the stage is affecting personal conduct to an unprecedented extent, and affecting it by no means for the worse, except in so far as the theatrical education of the persons concerned has been romantic—that is, spurious, cheap, and vulgar. The truth is that dramatic

invention is the first effort of man to become intellectually conscious. No frontier can be marked between drama and history or religion, or between acting and conduct, nor any distinction made between them that is not also the distinction between the masterpieces of the great dramatic poets and the commonplaces of our theatrical seasons. When this chapter of science is convincingly written, the national importance of the theatre will be as unquestioned as that of the army, the fleet, the Church, the law, and the schools.

For my part, I have no doubt that the commercial limits should be overstepped, and that the highest prestige, with a financial position of reasonable security and comfort, should be attainable in theatrical management by keeping the public in constant touch with the highest achievements of dramatic art. Our managers will not dissent to this. the best of them are so willing to get as near that position as they can without ruining themselves, that they can all point to honorable losses incurred through aiming 'over the heads of the public,' and will no doubt risk such loss again, for the sake of their reputation as artists, as soon as a few popular successes enable them to afford it. But even if it were possible for them to educate the nation at their own private cost, why should they be expected to do it? There are much stronger objections to the pauperization of the public by private doles than were ever entertained, even by the Poor Law Commissioners of 1834, to the pauperization of private individuals by public doles. If we want a theatre which shall be to the drama what the National Gallery and British Museum are to painting and literature, we can get it by endowing it in the same way. In the meantime there are many possibilities of local activity. Groups of amateurs can form permanent societies and persevere until they develop into professional companies in established repertory theatres. In big cities it should be feasible to form influential committees, preferably without any actors, critics, or playwrights on them, and with as many persons of title as possible, for the purpose of approaching one of the leading local managers with a proposal that they shall, under a guarantee against loss, undertake a certain number of afternoon performances of the class required by the committee, in addition to their ordinary business. If the committee is influential enough, the offer will be accepted. In that case, the first performance will be the beginning of a classic repertory for the manager and his company which every subsequent performance will extend. The formation of the repertory will go hand in hand with the discovery and habituation of a regular audience for it, and it will eventually become profitable for the manager to multiply the number of performances at his own risk. It might even become

worth his while to take a second theatre and establish the repertory permanently in it. In the event of any of his classic productions proving a fashionable success, he could transfer it to his fashionable house and make the most of it there. Such managership would carry a knighthood with it, and such a theatre would be the needed nucleus for municipal or national endowment. I make the suggestion quite disinterestedly, for as I am not an academic person, I should not be welcomed as an unacted classic by such a committee, and cases like mine would still leave forlorn hopes like *The Independent Theatre* its reason for existing. The committee plan, I may remind its critics, has been in operation in London for two hundred years in support of Italian opera.

Returning now to the actual state of things, it is clear that I have no grievance against our theatres. Knowing quite well what I was doing, I have heaped difficulties in the way of the performance of my plays by ignoring the majority of the manager's customers — namely, by positively making war on them. To the actor I have been more considerate, using all my cunning to enable him to make the most of his technical methods, but I have not hesitated on occasion to tax his intelligence very severely, making the stage effect depend not only on *nuances* of execution quite beyond the average skill produced by the routine of the English stage in its present condition, but on a perfectly sincere and straightforward conception of states of mind which still seem cynically perverse to most people, and on a good-humoredly contemptuous or profoundly pitiful attitude towards ethical conventions which seem to them validly heroic or venerable. It is inevitable that actors should suffer more than most of us from the sophistication of their consciousness by romance, and my view of romance as the great heresy to be swept off from art and life — as the food of modern pessimism and the bane of modern self-respect, is far more puzzling to the performers than it is to the pit. It is hard for an actor whose point of honor it is to be a perfect gentleman, to sympathize with an author who regards gentility as a dishonest folly, and gallantry and chivalry as treasonable to women and stultifying to men.

The misunderstanding is complicated by the fact that actors, in their demonstrations of emotion, have made a second nature of stage custom, which is often very much out of date as a representation of contemporary life. Sometimes the stage custom is not only obsolete, but fundamentally wrong. For instance, in the simple case of laughter and tears, in which it deals too liberally, it is certainly not based on the fact, easily enough discoverable in real life, that we only cry now in the effort to bear happiness, whilst we laugh and

exult in destruction, confusion, and ruin. When a comedy is performed, it is nothing to me that the spectators laugh any fool can make an audience laugh I want to see how many of them, laughing or grave, are in the melting mood. And this result cannot be achieved, even by actors who thoroughly understand my purpose, except through an artistic beauty of execution unattainable without long and arduous practice, and an intellectual effort which my plays probably do not seem serious enough to call forth

Beyond the difficulties thus raised by the nature and quality of my work, I have none to complain of. I have come upon no ill will, no inaccessibility, on the part of the very few managers with whom I have discussed it. As a rule I find that the actor-manager is oversanguine, because he has the artist's habit of underrating the force of circumstances and exaggerating the power of the talented individual to prevail against them, whilst I have acquired the politician's habit of regarding the individual, however talented, as having no choice but to make the most of his circumstances. I half suspect that those managers who have had most to do with me, if asked to name the main obstacle to the performance of my plays, would unhesitatingly and unanimously reply 'The author' And I confess that though as a matter of business I wish my plays to be performed, as a matter of instinct I fight against the inevitable misrepresentation of them with all the subtlety needed to conceal my ill will from myself as well as from the manager.

The main difficulty, of course, is the incapacity for serious drama of thousands of playgoers of all classes whose shillings and half guineas will buy as much in the market as if they delighted in the highest art But with them I must frankly take the superior position I know that many managers are wholly dependent on them, and that no manager is wholly independent of them, but I can no more write what they want than Joachim can put aside his fiddle and oblige a happy company of beanfeasters with a marching tune on the German concertina. They must keep away from my plays that is all.

There is no reason, however, why I should take this haughty attitude towards those representative critics whose complaint is that my talent, though not unentertaining, lacks elevation of sentiment and seriousness of purpose They can find, under the surface-brilliance for which they give me credit, no coherent thought or sympathy, and accuse me, in various terms and degrees, of an inhuman and freakish wantonness, of preoccupation with 'the seamy side of life', of paradox, cynicism, and eccentricity, reducible, as some contend, to a trite formula of treating bad as good and good

as bad, important as trivial and trivial as important, serious as laughable and laughable as serious, and so forth. As to this formula I can only say that if any gentleman is simple enough to think that even a good comic opera can be produced by it, I invite him to try his hand, and see whether anything resembling one of my plays will reward him.

I could explain the matter easily enough if I chose, but the result would be that the people who misunderstand the plays would misunderstand the explanation ten times more. The particular exceptions taken are seldom more than symptoms of the underlying fundamental disagreement between the romantic morality of the critics and the natural morality of the plays. For example, I am quite aware that the much criticized Swiss officer in *Arms and The Man* is not a conventional stage soldier. He suffers from want of food and sleep, his nerves go to pieces after three days under fire, ending in the horrors of a rout and pursuit, he has found by experience that it is more important to have a few bits of chocolate to eat in the field than cartridges for his revolver. When many of my critics rejected these circumstances as fantastically improbable and cynically unnatural, it was not necessary to argue them into common sense. All I had to do was to brain them, so to speak, with the first half dozen military authorities at hand, beginning with the present Commander in Chief. But when it proved that such unromantic (but all the more dramatic) facts implied to them a denial of the existence of courage, patriotism, faith, hope, and charity, I saw that it was not really mere matter of fact that was at issue between us. One strongly Liberal critic, the late Moy Thomas, who had, in the teeth of a chorus of dissent, received my first play with the most generous encouragement, declared, when *Arms and The Man* was produced, that I had struck a wanton blow at the cause of liberty in the Balkan Peninsula by mentioning that it was not a matter of course for a Bulgarian in 1885 to wash his hands every day. He no doubt saw soon afterwards the squabble, reported all through Europe, between Stamboulloff and an eminent lady of the Bulgarian court who took exception to his neglect of his fingernails. After that came the news of his ferocious assassination, with a description of the room prepared for the reception of visitors by his widow, who draped it with black, and decorated it with photographs of the mutilated body of her husband. Here was a sufficiently sensational confirmation of the accuracy of any sketch of the theatrical nature of the first apings of western civilization by spirited races just emerging from slavery. But it had no bearing on the real issue between my critic and myself, which was, whether the political and religious idealism which had inspired

PREFACE

Gladstone to call for the rescue of these Balkan principalities from the despotism of the Turk, and converted miserably enslaved provinces into hopeful and gallant little States, will survive the general onslaught on idealism which is implicit, and indeed explicit, in *Arms and The Man* and the naturalist plays of the modern school. For my part I hope not; for idealism, which is only a flattering name for romance in politics and morals, is as obnoxious to me as romance in ethics or religion. In spite of a Liberal Revolution or two, I can no longer be satisfied with fictitious morals and fictitious good conduct, shedding fictitious glory on robbery, starvation, disease, crime, drink, war, cruelty, cupidity, and all the other commonplaces of civilization which drive men to the theatre to make foolish pretences that such things are progress, science, morals, religion, patriotism, imperial supremacy, national greatness and all the other names the newspapers call them. On the other hand, I see plenty of good in the world working itself out as fast as the idealists will allow it; and if they would only let it alone and learn to respect reality, which would include the beneficial exercise of respecting themselves, and incidentally respecting me, we should all get along much better and faster. At all events, I do not see moral chaos and anarchy as the alternative to romantic convention, and I am not going to pretend I do merely to please the people who are convinced that the world is held together only by the force of unanimous, strenuous, eloquent, trumpet-tongued lying. To me the tragedy and comedy of life lie in the consequences, sometimes terrible, sometimes ludicrous, of our persistent attempts to found our institutions on the ideals suggested to our imaginations by our half-satisfied passions, instead of on a genuinely scientific natural history. And with that hint as to what I am driving at, I withdraw and ring up the curtain.

ARMS AND THE MAN

1894

ARMS AND THE MAN

ACT I

Night A lady's bedchamber in Bulgaria, in a small town near the Dragoman Pass, late in November in the year 1885 Through an open window with a little balcony a peak of the Balkans, wonderfully white and beautiful in the starlit snow, seems quite close at hand, though it is really miles away The interior of the room is not like anything to be seen in the west of Europe It is half rich Bulgarian, half cheap Viennese Above the head of the bed, which stands against a little wall cutting off the left hand corner of the room, is a painted wooden shrine, blue and gold, with an ivory image of Christ, and a light hanging before it in a pierced metal ball suspended by three chains The principal seat, placed towards the other side of the room and opposite the window, is a Turkish ottoman The counterpane and hangings of the bed, the window curtains, the little carpet, and all the ornamental textile fabrics in the room are oriental and gorgeous, the paper on the walls is occidental and paltry The washstand, against the wall on the side nearest the ottoman and window, consists of an enamelled iron basin with a pail beneath it in a painted metal frame, and a single towel on the rail at the side The dressing table, between the bed and the window, is a common pine table, covered with a cloth of many colours, with an expensive toilet mirror on it The door is on the side nearest the bed, and there is a chest of drawers between This chest of drawers is also covered by a variegated native cloth, and on it there is a pile of paper backed novels, a box of chocolate creams, and a miniature easel with a large photograph of an extremely handsome officer, whose lofty bearing and magnetic glance can be felt even from the portrait The room is lighted by a candle on the chest of drawers, and another on the dressing table with a box of matches beside it

The window is hinged doorwise and stands wide open Outside, a pair of wooden shutters, opening outwards, also stand open On the balcony a young lady, intensely conscious of the romantic beauty of night, and of the fact that her own youth and beauty are part of it is gazing at the snowy Balkans She is in her nightgown, well

covered by a long mantle of furs, worth, on a moderate estimate, about three times the furniture of the room.

Her reverie is interrupted by her mother, Catherine Petkoff, a woman over forty, imperiously energetic, with magnificent black hair and eyes, who might be a very splendid specimen of the wife of a mountain farmer, but is determined to be a Viennese lady, and to that end wears a fashionable tea gown on all occasions.

CATHERINE [*entering hastily, full of good news*] Raina! [*She pronounces it Rah-eena, with the stress on the ee*]. Raina! [*She goes to the bed, expecting to find Raina there*]. Why, where – ? [*Raina looks into the room*]. Heavens, child! are you out in the night air instead of in your bed? You'll catch your death. Louka told me you were asleep.

RAINA [*dreamily*] I sent her away. I wanted to be alone. The stars are so beautiful! What is the matter?

CATHERINE. Such news! There has been a battle.

RAINA [*her eyes dilating*] Ah! [*She comes eagerly to Catherine*].

CATHERINE. A great battle at Slivnitsa! A victory! And it was won by Sergius.

RAINA [*with a cry of delight*] Ah! [*They embrace rapturously*] Oh, mother! [*Then, with sudden anxiety*] Is father safe?

CATHERINE. Of course! he sends me the news. Sergius is the hero of the hour, the idol of the regiment.

RAINA. Tell me, tell me. How was it? [*Ecstatically*] Oh, mother! mother! mother! [*She pulls her mother down on the ottoman, and they kiss one another frantically*].

CATHERINE [*with surging enthusiasm*] You can't guess how splendid it is. A cavalry charge! think of that! He defied our Russian commanders – acted without orders – led a charge on his own responsibility – headed it himself – was the first man to sweep through their guns. Can't you see it, Raina: our gallant splendid Bulgarians with their swords and eyes flashing, thundering down like an avalanche and scattering the wretched Serbs and their dandified Austrian officers like chaff. And you! you kept Sergius waiting a year before you would be betrothed to him. Oh, if you have a

drop of Bulgarian blood in your veins, you will worship him when he comes back

RAINA What will he care for my poor little worship after the acclamations of a whole army of heroes? But no matter I am so happy! so proud! [*She rises and walks about excitedly*] It proves that all our ideas were real after all

CATHERINE [*indignantly*] Our ideas real! What do you mean?

RAINA Our ideas of what Sergius would do Our patriotism Our heroic ideals I sometimes used to doubt whether they were anything but dreams Oh, what faithless little creatures girls are! When I buckled on Sergius's sword he looked so noble it was treason to think of disillusion or humiliation or failure And yet – and yet – [*She sits down again suddenly*] Promise me you'll never tell him

CATHERINE Don't ask me for promises until I know what I'm promising

RAINA Well, it came into my head just as he was holding me in his arms and looking into my eyes, that perhaps we only had our heroic ideas because we are so fond of reading Byron and Pushkin, and because we were so delighted with the opera that season at Bucharest Real life is so seldom like that! indeed never, as far as I knew it then [*Remorsefully*] Only think, mother I doubted him I wondered whether all his heroic qualities and his soldiership might not prove mere imagination when he went into a real battle I had an uneasy fear that he might cut a poor figure there beside all those clever officers from the Tsar's court

CATHERINE A poor figure! Shame on you! The Serbs have Austrian officers who are just as clever as the Russians, but we have beaten them in every battle for all that

RAINA [*laughing and snuggling against her mother*] Yes I was only a prosaic little coward Oh, to think that it was all true! that Sergius is just as splendid and noble as he looks! that the world is really a glorious world for women who can see its glory and men who can act its romance! What

happiness! what unspeakable fulfilment!

They are interrupted by the entry of Louka, a handsome proud girl in a pretty Bulgarian peasant's dress with double apron, so defiant that her servility to Raina is almost insolent. She is afraid of Catherine, but even with her goes as far as she dares.

LOUKA. If you please, madam, all the windows are to be closed and the shutters made fast. They say there may be shooting in the streets. [*Raina and Catherine rise together, alarmed*] The Serbs are being chased right back through the pass, and they say they may run into the town. Our cavalry will be after them; and our people will be ready for them, you may be sure, now they're running away. [*She goes out on the balcony, and pulls the outside shutters to, then steps back into the room*].

CATHERINE [*businesslike, housekeeping instincts aroused*] I must see that everything is made safe downstairs.

RAINA. I wish our people were not so cruel. What glory is there in killing wretched fugitives?

CATHERINE. Cruel! Do you suppose they would hesitate to kill you – or worse?

RAINA [*to Louka*] Leave the shutters so that I can just close them if I hear any noise.

CATHERINE [*authoritatively, turning on her way to the door*] Oh no, dear you must keep them fastened. You would be sure to drop off to sleep and leave them open. Make them fast, Louka.

LOUKA. Yes, madam. [*She fastens them*].

RAINA. Don't be anxious about me. The moment I hear a shot, I shall blow out the candles and roll myself up in bed with my ears well covered.

CATHERINE. Quite the wisest thing you can do, my love. Goodnight.

RAINA. Goodnight. [*Her emotion comes back for a moment*]. Wish me joy [*They kiss*]. This is the happiest night of my life – if only there are no fugitives.

CATHERINE. Go to bed, dear, and don't think of them [*She goes out*].

LOUKA [*secretly to Raina*] If you would like the shutters open, just give them a push like this [*she pushes them they open she pulls them to again*] One of them ought to be bolted at the bottom, but the bolt's gone

RAINA [*with dignity, reproving her*] Thanks, Louka, but we must do what we are told [*Louka makes a grimace*] Good-night

LOUKA [*carelessly*] Goodnight [*She goes out, swaggering*]

Raina, left alone, takes off her fur cloak and throws it on the ottoman. Then she goes to the chest of drawers, and adores the portrait there with feelings that are beyond all expression. She does not kiss it or press it to her breast, or shew it any mark of bodily affection, but she takes it in her hands and elevates it, like a priestess

RAINA [*looking up at the picture*] Oh, I shall never be unworthy of you any more, my soul's hero never, never, never [*She replaces it reverently. Then she selects a novel from the little pile of books. She turns over the leaves dreamily, finds her page, turns the book inside out at it, and, with a happy sigh, gets into bed and prepares to read herself to sleep. But before abandoning herself to fiction, she raises her eyes once more, thinking of the blessed reality, and murmurs*] My hero! my hero!

A distant shot breaks the quiet of the night. She starts, listening, and two more shots, much nearer, follow, startling her so that she scrambles out of bed, and hastily blows out the candle on the chest of drawers. Then, putting her fingers in her ears, she runs to the dressing table, blows out the light there, and hurries back to bed in the dark, nothing being visible but the glimmer of the light in the pierced ball before the image, and the starlight seen through the slits at the top of the shutters. The firing breaks out again there is a startling fusillade quite close at hand. Whilst it is still echoing, the shutters disappear, pulled open from without, and for an instant the rectangle of snowy starlight flashes out with the figure of a man silhouetted in black upon it. The shutters close immediately, and the room is dark again. But the silence is now broken by the sound of panting. Then there is a scratch, and the flame of a match is seen in the middle of the room

RAINA [*crouching on the bed*] Who's there? [*The match is out instantly*] Who's there? Who is that?

A MAN'S VOICE [*in the darkness, subduedly, but threateningly*] Sh - sh! Dont call out, or youll be shot. Be good; and no harm will happen to you. [*She is heard leaving her bed, and making for the door*]. Take care: it's no use trying to run away

RAINA. But who -

THE VOICE [*warning*] Remember: if you raise your voice my revolver will go off [*Commandingly*] Strike a light and let me see you. Do you hear. [*Another moment of silence and darkness as she retreats to the chest of drawers. Then she lights a candle; and the mystery is at an end. He is a man of about 35, in a deplorable plight, bespattered with mud and blood and snow, his belt and the strap of his revolver-case keeping together the torn ruins of the blue tunic of a Serbian artillery officer. All that the candlelight and his unwashed unkempt condition make it possible to discern is that he is of middling stature and undistinguished appearance, with strong neck and shoulders, roundish obstinate looking head covered with short crisp bronze curls, clear quick eyes and good brows and mouth, hopelessly prosaic nose like that of a strong minded baby, trim soldierlike carriage and energetic manner, and with all his wits about him in spite of his desperate predicament: even with a sense of the humor of it, without, however, the least intention of trifling with it or throwing away a chance. Reckoning up what he can guess about Raina: her age, her social position, her character, and the extent to which she is frightened, he continues, more politely but still most determinedly*] Excuse my disturbing you; but you recognize my uniform? Serb! If I'm caught I shall be killed [*Menacingly*] Do you understand that?

RAINA. Yes

THE MAN. Well, I dont intend to get killed if I can help it. [*Still more formidably*] Do you understand that? [*He locks the door quickly but quietly*].

RAINA [*disdainfully*] I suppose not. [*She draws herself up superbly, and looks him straight in the face, adding, with cutting emphasis*] Some soldiers, I know, are afraid to die.

THE MAN [*with grim goodhumor*] All of them, dear lady, all of them, believe me It is our duty to live as long as we can Now, if you raise an alarm -

RAINA [*cutting him short*] You will shoot me How do you know that *I* am afraid to die?

THE MAN [*cunningly*] Ah, but suppose I don't shoot you, what will happen then? A lot of your cavalry will burst into this pretty room of yours and slaughter me here like a pig, for I'll fight like a demon they shan't get me into the street to amuse themselves with I know what they are Are you prepared to receive that sort of company in your present undress? [*Raina, suddenly conscious of her nightgown, instinctively shrinks and gathers it more closely about her neck He watches her and adds pitilessly*] Hardly presentable, eh? [*She turns to the ottoman He raises his pistol instantly, and cries*] Stop! [*She stops*] Where are you going?

RAINA [*with dignified patience*] Only to get my cloak

THE MAN [*passing swiftly to the ottoman and snatching the cloak*] A good idea! I'll keep the cloak, and you'll take care that nobody comes in and sees you without it This is a better weapon than the revolver eh? [*He throws the pistol down on the ottoman*]

RAINA [*revolted*] It is not the weapon of a gentleman!

THE MAN It's good enough for a man with only you to stand between him and death [*As they look at one another for a moment, Raina hardly able to believe that even a Serbian officer can be so cynically and selfishly unchivalrous, they are startled by a sharp fusillade in the street The chill of imminent death hushes the man's voice as he adds*] Do you hear? If you are going to bring those blackguards in on me you shall receive them as you are

Clamor and disturbance The pursuers in the street batter at the house door, shouting Open the door! Open the door! Wake up, will you! A man servant's voice calls to them angrily from within This is Major Petkoff's house you can't come in here, but a renewal of the clamor, and a torrent of blows on the door, end with his letting a chain down with a clank, followed by a rush of

heavy footsteps and a din of triumphant yells, dominated at last by the voice of Catherine, indignantly addressing an officer with What does this mean, sir? Do you know where you are? The noise subsides suddenly

LOUKA [*outside, knocking at the bedroom door*] My lady! my lady! get up quick and open the door. If you dont they will break it down

The fugitive throws up his head with the gesture of a man who sees that it is all over with him, and drops the manner he has been assuming to intimidate Raina

THE MAN [*sincerely and kindly*] No use, dear: I'm done for. [*Flinging the cloak to her*] Quick! wrap yourself up: theyre coming.

RAINA. Oh, thank you. [*She wraps herself up with intense relief*].

THE MAN [*between his teeth*] Dont mention it.

RAINA [*anxiously*] What will you do?

THE MAN [*grimly*] The first man in will find out Keep out of the way, and dont look. It wont last long, but it will not be nice [*He draws his sabre and faces the door, waiting*].

RAINA [*impulsively*] I'll help you. I'll save you.

THE MAN You cant.

RAINA. I can. I'll hide you [*She drags him towards the window*]. Here! behind the curtains.

THE MAN [*yielding to her*] Theres just half a chance, if you keep your head.

RAINA [*drawing the curtain before him*] S-sh! [*She makes for the ottoman*]

THE MAN [*putting out his head*] Remember —

RAINA [*running back to him*] Yes?

THE MAN — nine soldiers out of ten are born fools.

RAINA Oh! [*She draws the curtain angrily before him*].

THE MAN [*looking out at the other side*] If they find me, I promise you a fight. a devil of a fight.

She stamps at him He disappears hastily. She takes off her cloak, and throws it across the foot of the bed Then, with a sleepy, disturbed air, she opens the door. Louka enters excitedly.

LOUKA One of those beasts of Serbs has been seen climbing up the waterpipe to your balcony Our men want to search for him, and they are so wild and drunk and furious [*She makes for the other side of the room to get as far from the door as possible*] My lady says you are to dress at once, and to – [*She sees the revolver lying on the ottoman, and stops, petrified*]

RAINA [*as if annoyed at being disturbed*] They shall not search here Why have they been let in?

CATHERINE [*coming in hastily*] Raina, darling, are you safe? 'Have you seen anyone or heard anything?

RAINA I heard the shooting Surely the soldiers will not dare come in here?

CATHERINE I have found a Russian officer, thank Heaven he knows Sergius [*Speaking through the door to someone outside*] Sir will you come in now My daughter will receive you

A young Russian officer, in Bulgarian uniform, enters, sword in hand

OFFICER [*with soft feline politeness and stiff military carriage*] Good evening, gracious lady I am sorry to intrude, but there is a Serb hiding on the balcony Will you and the gracious lady your mother please to withdraw whilst we search?

RAINA [*petulantly*] Nonsense, sir you can see that there is no one on the balcony [*She throws the shutters wide open and stands with her back to the curtain where the man is hidden, pointing to the moonlit balcony A couple of shots are fired right under the window, and a bullet shatters the glass opposite Raina, who winks and gasps, but stands her ground, whilst Catherine screams, and the officer, with a cry of Take care! rushes to the balcony*]

THE OFFICER [*on the balcony, shouting savagely down to the street*] Cease firing there, you fools do you hear? Cease firing, damn you! [*He glares down for a moment, then turns to Raina, trying to resume his polite manner*] Could anyone have got in without your knowledge? Were you asleep?

RAINA No I have not been to bed

THE OFFICER [*impatently, coming back into the room*] Your

neighbors have their heads so full of runaway Serbs that they see them everywhere. [*Politely*] Gracious lady. a thousand pardons. Goodnight. [*Military bow, which Raina returns coldly. Another to Catherine, who follows him out*].

Raina closes the shutters. She turns and sees Louka, who has been watching the scene curiously

RAINA. Dont leave my mother, Louka, until the soldiers go away.

Louka glances at Raina, at the ottoman, at the curtain; then purses her lips secretly, laughs insolently, and goes out. Raina, highly offended by this demonstration, follows her to the door, and shuts it behind her with a slam, locking it violently. The man immediately steps out from behind the curtain, sheathing his sabre. Then, dismissing the danger from his mind in a businesslike way, he comes affably to Raina.

THE MAN A narrow shave; but a miss is as good as a mile. Dear young lady: your servant to the death. I wish for your sake I had joined the Bulgarian army instead of the other one. I am not a native Serb

RAINA [*haughtily*] No: you are one of the Austrians who set the Serbs on to rob us of our national liberty, and who officer their army for them. We hate them!

THE MAN. Austrian! not I Dont hate me, dear young lady. I am a Swiss, fighting merely as a professional soldier. I joined the Serbs because they came first on the road from Switzerland. Be generous youve beaten us hollow.

RAINA. Have I not been generous?

THE MAN. Noble! Heroic! But I'm not saved yet This particular rush will soon pass through; but the pursuit will go on all night by fits and starts. I must take my chance to get off in a quiet interval [*Pleasantly*] You dont mind my waiting just a minute or two, do you?

RAINA [*putting on her most genteel society manner*] Oh, not at all. Wont you sit down?

THE MAN. Thanks. [*He sits on the foot of the bed*]

Raina walks with studied elegance to the ottoman and sits down. Unfortunately she sits on the pistol, and jumps up with a

shriek The man, all nerves, shies like a frightened horse to the other side of the room

THE MAN [*irritably*] Dont frighten me like that What is it?

RAINA Your revolver! It was staring that officer in the face all the time What an escape!

THE MAN [*vexed at being unnecessarily terrified*] Oh, is that all?

RAINA [*staring at him rather superciliously as she conceives a poorer and poorer opinion of him, and feels proportionately more and more at her ease*] I am sorry I frightened you [*She takes up the pistol and hands it to him*] Pray take it to protect yourself against me

THE MAN [*grinning wearily at the sarcasm as he takes the pistol*] No use, dear young lady theres nothing in it It's not loaded [*He makes a grimace at it, and drops it disparagingly into his revolver case*]

RAINA Load it by all means

THE MAN Ive no ammunition What use are cartridges in battle? I always carry chocolate instead, and I finished the last cake of that hours ago

RAINA [*outraged in her most cherished ideals of manhood*] Chocolate! Do you stuff your pockets with sweets – like a school-boy – even in the field?

THE MAN [*grinning*] Yes isnt it contemptible? [*Hungrily*] I wish I had some now

RAINA Allow me [*She sails away scornfully to the chest of drawers, and returns with the box of confectionery in her hand*] I am sorry I have eaten them all except these [*She offers him the box*]

THE MAN [*ravenously*] Youre an angel! [*He gobbles the contents*] Creams! Delicious! [*He looks anxiously to see whether there are any more There are none he can only scrape the box with his fingers and suck them When that nourishment is exhausted he accepts the inevitable with pathetic goodhumor, and says, with grateful emotion*] Bless you, dear lady! You can always tell an old soldier by the inside of his holsters and cartridge boxes The young ones carry pistols and cartridges the old ones, grub Thank you [*He hands back the box She snatches it*]

contemptuously from him and throws it away He shies again, as if she had meant to strike him] Ugh! Dont do things so suddenly, gracious lady It's mean to revenge yourself because I frightened you just now

RAINA [*loftily*] Frighten me! Do you know, sir, that though I am only a woman, I think I am at heart as brave as you

THE MAN I should think so. You havnt been under fire for three days as I have I can stand two days without shewing it much, but no man can stand three days I'm as nervous as a mouse [*He sits down on the ottoman, and takes his head in his hands*] Would you like to see me cry?

RAINA [*alarmed*] No

THE MAN If you would, all you have to do is to scold me just as if I were a little boy and you my nurse If I were in camp now, theyd play all sorts of tricks on me

RAINA [*a little moved*] I'm sorry I wont scold you [*Touched by the sympathy in her tone, he raises his head and looks gratefully at her she immediately draws back and says stiffly*] You must excuse me: our soldiers are not like that. [*She moves away from the ottoman*]

THE MAN. Oh yes they are There are only two sorts of soldiers: old ones and young ones Ive served fourteen years half of your fellows never smelt powder before. Why how is it that youve just beaten us? Sheer ignorance of the art of war, nothing else [*Indignantly*] I never saw anything so unprofessional

RAINA [*ironically*] Oh! was it unprofessional to beat you?

THE MAN Well, come! is it professional to throw a regiment of cavalry on a battery of machine guns, with the dead certainty that if the guns go off not a horse or man will ever get within fifty yards of the fire? I couldnt believe my eye when I saw it

RAINA [*eagerly turning to him, as all her enthusiasm and her dream of glory rush back on her*] Did you see the great cavalry charge? Oh, tell me about it Describe it to me

THE MAN. You never saw a cavalry charge, did you?

RAINA How could I?

THE MAN Ah, perhaps not No of course not! Well, it's a funny sight It's like slinging a handful of peas against a window pane first one comes, then two or three close behind him, and then all the rest in a lump

RAINA [*her eyes dilating as she raises her clasped hands ecstatically*]
Yes, first One! the bravest of the brave!

THE MAN [*prosaically*] Hm! you should see the poor devil pulling at his horse

RAINA Why should he pull at his horse?

THE MAN [*impatient of so stupid a question*] It's running away with him, of course do you suppose the fellow wants to get there before the others and be killed? Then they all come You can tell the young ones by their wildness and their slashing The old ones come bunched up under the number one guard they know that they're mere projectiles, and that it's no use trying to fight The wounds are mostly broken knees, from the horses cannoning together

RAINA Ugh! But I don't believe the first man is a coward I know he is a hero!

THE MAN [*goodhumoredly*] That's what you'd have said if you'd seen the first man in the charge today

RAINA [*breathless, forgiving him everything*] Ah, I knew it! Tell me Tell me about him

THE MAN He did it like an operatic tenor A regular handsome fellow, with flashing eyes and lovely moustache, shouting his war-cry and charging like Don Quixote at the windmills We did laugh

RAINA You dared to laugh!

THE MAN Yes, but when the sergeant ran up as white as a sheet, and told us they'd sent us the wrong ammunition, and that we couldn't fire a round for the next ten minutes, we laughed at the other side of our mouths I never felt so sick in my life, though I've been in one or two very tight places And I hadn't even a revolver cartridge only chocolate We'd no bayonets nothing Of course, they just cut us to bits And there was Don Quixote flourishing like a drum major, thinking he'd done the cleverest thing ever

known, whereas he ought to be courtmartialled for it. Of all the fools ever let loose on a field of battle, that man must be the very maddest. He and his regiment simply committed suicide, only the pistol missed fire – that's all.

RAINA [*deeply wounded, but steadfastly loyal to her ideals*] Indeed!

Would you know him again if you saw him?

THE MAN. Shall I ever forget him!

She again goes to the chest of drawers. He watches her with a vague hope that she may have something more for him to eat. She takes the portrait from its stand and brings it to him.

RAINA. That is a photograph of the gentleman – the patriot and hero – to whom I am betrothed.

THE MAN [*recognizing it with a shock*] I'm really very sorry.

[*Looking at her*] Was it fair to lead me on? [*He looks at the portrait again*] Yes – that's Don Quixote. not a doubt of it.

[*He stifles a laugh*]

RAINA [*quickly*] Why do you laugh?

THE MAN [*apologetic, but still greatly tickled*] I didn't laugh, I assure you. At least I didn't mean to. But when I think of him charging the windmills and imagining he was doing the finest thing – [*He chokes with suppressed laughter*].

RAINA [*sternly*] Give me back the portrait, sir.

THE MAN [*with sincere remorse*] Of course. Certainly. I'm really very sorry. [*He hands her the picture. She deliberately kisses it and looks him straight in the face before returning to the chest of drawers to replace it. He follows her, apologizing*]. Perhaps I'm quite wrong, you know – no doubt I am. Most likely he had got wind of the cartridge business somehow, and knew it was a safe job.

RAINA. That is to say, he was a pretender and a coward! You did not dare say that before.

THE MAN [*with a comic gesture of despair*] It's no use, dear lady. I can't make you see it from the professional point of view. [*As he turns away to get back to the ottoman, a couple of distant shots threaten renewed trouble*].

RAINA [*sternly, as she sees him listening to the shots*] So much the better for you!

THE MAN [*turning*] How?

RAINA You are my enemy, and you are at my mercy. What would I do if I were a professional soldier?

THE MAN Ah, true, dear young lady, you're always right. I know how good you've been to me. To my last hour I shall remember those three chocolate creams. It was unsoldierly, but it was angelic.

RAINA [*coldly*] Thank you. And now I will do a soldierly thing. You cannot stay here after what you have just said about my future husband, but I will go out on the balcony and see whether it is safe for you to climb down into the street. [*She turns to the window*]

THE MAN [*changing countenance*] Down that waterpipe! Stop! Wait! I can't! I daren't! The very thought of it makes me giddy. I came up it fast enough with death behind me. But to face it now in cold blood - ! [*He sinks on the ottoman*] It's no use. I give up. I'm beaten. Give the alarm. [*He drops his head on his hands in the deepest dejection*]

RAINA [*disarmed by pity*] Come, don't be disheartened. [*She stoops over him almost maternally. He shakes his head*] Oh, you are a very poor soldier, a chocolate cream soldier! Come, cheer up! It takes less courage to climb down than to face capture. Remember that.

THE MAN [*dreamily, lulled by her voice*] No, capture only means death, and death is sleep. Oh, sleep, sleep, sleep, undisturbed sleep! Climbing down the pipe means doing something - exerting myself - thinking! Death ten times over first.

RAINA [*softly and wonderingly, catching the rhythm of his weariness*] Are you as sleepy as that?

THE MAN I've not had two hours undisturbed sleep since I joined. I haven't closed my eyes for forty-eight hours.

RAINA [*at her wit's end*] But what am I to do with you?

THE MAN [*staggering up, roused by her desperation*] Of course I must do something. [*He shakes himself, pulls himself together, and speaks with rallied vigor and courage*] You see, sleep or no sleep, hunger or no hunger, tired or not tired, you can

always do a thing when you know it must be done. Well, that pipe must be got down. [*he hits himself on the chest*] do you hear that, you chocolate cream soldier? [*He turns to the window*].

RAINA [*anxiously*] But if you fall?

THE MAN. I shall sleep as if the stones were a feather bed. Goodbye [*He makes boldly for the window, and his hand is on the shutter when there is a terrible burst of firing in the street beneath*].

RAINA [*rushing to him*] Stop! [*She seizes him recklessly, and pulls him quite round*]. They'll kill you.

THE MAN [*coolly, but attentively*] Never mind: this sort of thing is all in my day's work. I'm bound to take my chance. [*Decisively*] Now do what I tell you. Put out the candle, so that they shant see the light when I open the shutters. And keep away from the window, whatever you do. If they see me theyre sure to have a shot at me.

RAINA [*clinging to him*] Theyre sure to see you. it's bright moonlight I'll save you Oh, how can you be so indifferent! You want me to save you, dont you?

THE MAN. I really dont want to be troublesome. [*She shakes him in her impatience*] I am not indifferent, dear young lady, I assure you. But how is it to be done?

RAINA. Come away from the window. [*She takes him firmly back to the middle of the room. The moment she releases him he turns mechanically towards the window again. She seizes him and turns him back, exclaiming*] Please! [*He becomes motionless, like a hypnotized rabbit, his fatigue gaining fast on him. She releases him, and addresses him patronizingly*]. Now listen. You must trust to our hospitality. You do not yet know in whose house you are I am a Petkoff.

THE MAN. A pet what?

RAINA [*rather indignantly*] I mean that I belong to the family of the Petkoffs, the richest and best known in our country.

THE MAN. Oh yes, of course. I beg your pardon. The Petkoffs, to be sure. How stupid of me!

RAINA. You know you never heard of them until this

moment How can you stoop to pretend!

THE MAN Forgive me I'm too tired to think, and the change of subject was too much for me Don't scold me

RAINA I forgot It might make you cry [*He nods, quite seriously She pouts and then resumes her patronizing tone*] I must tell you that my father holds the highest command of any Bulgarian in our army He is [*proudly*] a Major

THE MAN [*pretending to be deeply impressed*] A Major! Bless me! Think of that!

RAINA. You showed great ignorance in thinking that it was necessary to climb up to the balcony because ours is the only private house that has two rows of windows There is a flight of stairs inside to get up and down by

THE MAN Stairs! How grand! You live in great luxury indeed, dear young lady

RAINA Do you know what a library is?

THE MAN A library? A roomful of books?

RAINA Yes We have one, the only one in Bulgaria

THE MAN Actually a real library! I should like to see that

RAINA [*affectedly*] I tell you these things to shew you that you are not in the house of ignorant country folk who would kill you the moment they saw your Serbian uniform, but among civilized people We go to Bucharest every year for the opera season, and I have spent a whole month in Vienna

THE MAN I saw that, dear young lady I saw at once that you knew the world

RAINA Have you ever seen the opera of Ernani?

THE MAN Is that the one with the devil in it in red velvet, and a soldiers' chorus?

RAINA [*contemptuously*] No!

THE MAN [*stifling a heavy sigh of weariness*] Then I don't know it

RAINA I thought you might have remembered the great scene where Ernani, flying from his foes just as you are tonight, takes refuge in the castle of his bitterest enemy, an old Castilian noble The noble refuses to give him up His guest is sacred to him

THE MAN [*quickly, waking up a little*] Have your people got that notion?

RAINA [*with dignity*] My mother and I can understand that notion, as you call it. And if instead of threatening me with your pistol as you did you had simply thrown yourself as a fugitive on our hospitality, you would have been as safe as in your father's house.

THE MAN. Quite sure?

RAINA [*turning her back on him in disgust*] Oh, it is useless to try to make you understand.

THE MAN. Dont be angry: you see how awkward it would be for me if there was any mistake. My father is a very hospitable man: he keeps six hotels; but I couldnt trust him as far as that. What about your father?

RAINA. He is away at Slivnitsa fighting for his country. I answer for your safety. There is my hand in pledge of it. Will that reassure you? [*She offers him her hand*].

THE MAN [*looking dubiously at his own hand*] Better not touch my hand, dear young lady. I must have a wash first.

RAINA [*touched*] That is very nice of you. I see that you are a gentleman.

THE MAN [*puzzled*] Eh?

RAINA. You must not think I am surprised. Bulgarians of really good standing – people in our position – wash their hands nearly every day. So you see I can appreciate your delicacy. You may take my hand. [*She offers it again*].

THE MAN [*kissing it with his hands behind his back*] Thanks, gracious young lady: I feel safe at last. And now would you mind breaking the news to your mother? I had better not stay here secretly longer than is necessary.

RAINA. If you will be so good as to keep perfectly still whilst I am away.

THE MAN. Certainly. [*He sits down on the ottoman*].

Raina goes to the bed and wraps herself in the fur cloak. His eyes close. She goes to the door. Turning for a last look at him, she sees that he is dropping off to sleep

RAINA [*at the door*] You are not going asleep, are you? [*He*

murmurs inarticulately she runs to him and shakes him] Do you hear? Wake up you are falling asleep

THE MAN Eh? Falling asleep? Oh no not the least in the world I was only thinking It's all right I'm wide awake

RAINA [*severely*] Will you please stand up while I am away [*He rises reluctantly*] All the time, mind

THE MAN [*standing unsteadily*] Certainly Certainly you may depend on me

Raina looks doubtfully at him He smiles weakly She goes reluctantly, turning again at the door, and almost catching him in the act of yawning She goes out

THE MAN [*drowsily*] Sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep— [*The words trail off into a murmur He wakes again with a shock on the point of falling*] Where am I? That's what I want to know where am I? Must keep awake Nothing keeps me awake except danger remember that [*intently*] danger, danger, danger, dan— [*trailing off again, another shock*] Wheres danger? Mus' find it [*He starts off vaguely round the room in search of it*] What am I looking for? Sleep—danger—don't know [*He stumbles against the bed*] Ah yes now I know All right now I'm to go to bed, but not to sleep Be sure not to sleep, because of danger Not to lie down either, only sit down [*He sits on the bed A blissful expression comes into his face*] Ah! [*With a happy sigh he sinks back at full length, lifts his boots into the bed with a final effort, and falls fast asleep instantly*]

Catherine comes in, followed by Raina

RAINA [*looking at the ottoman*] He's gone! I left him here

CATHERINE Here! Then he must have climbed down from the—

RAINA [*seeing him*] Oh! [*She points*]

CATHERINE [*scandalized*] Well! [*She strides to the bed, Raina following until she is opposite her on the other side*] He's fast asleep The brute!

RAINA [*anxiously*] Sh!

CATHERINE [*shaking him*] Sir! [*Shaking him again, harder*] Sir!! [*Vehemently, shaking very hard*] Sir!!!

ACT II

The sixth of March, 1886 In the garden of Major Petkoff's house It is a fine spring morning the garden looks fresh and pretty Beyond the paling the tops of a couple of minarets can be seen, shewing that there is a valley there, with the little town in it A few miles further the Balkan mountains rise and shut in the landscape Looking towards them from within the garden, the side of the house is seen on the left, with a garden door reached by a little flight of steps On the right the stable yard, with its gateway, encroaches on the garden There are fruit bushes along the paling and house, covered with washing spread out to dry A path runs by the house, and rises by two steps at the corner, where it turns out of sight In the middle, a small table, with two bent wood chairs at it, is laid for breakfast with Turkish coffee pot, cups, rolls, etc , but the cups have been used and the bread broken There is a wooden garden seat against the wall on the right

Louka, smoking a cigaret, is standing between the table and the house, turning her back with angry disdain on a man servant who is lecturing her He is a middle-aged man of cool temperament and low but clear and keen intelligence, with the complacency of the servant who values himself on his rank in servitude, and the imperturbability of the accurate calculator who has no illusions He wears a white Bulgarian costume jacket with embroidered border, sash, wide knickerbockers, and decorated gaiters His head is shaved up to the crown, giving him a high Japanese forehead His name is Nicola

NICOLA Be warned in time, Louka mend your manners I know the mistress She is so grand that she never dreams that any servant could dare be disrespectful to her, but if she once suspects that you are defying her, out you go

LOUKA I do defy her I will defy her What do I care for her?

NICOLA If you quarrel with the family, I never can marry you It's the same as if you quarrelled with me!

LOUKA You take her part against me, do you?

NICOLA [*sedately*] I shall always be dependent on the good will of the family When I leave their service and start a

shop in Sofia, their custom will be half my capital: their bad word would ruin me.

LOUKA. You have no spirit. I should like to catch them saying a word against me!

NICOLA [*pitifully*] I should have expected more sense from you, Louka. But youre young youre young!

LOUKA. Yes; and you like me the better for it, dont you? But I know some family secrets they wouldnt care to have told, young as I am. Let them quarrel with me if they dare!

NICOLA [*with compassionate superiority*] Do you know what they would do if they heard you talk like that?

LOUKA. What could they do?

NICOLA Discharge you for untruthfulness. Who would believe any stories you told after that? Who would give you another situation? Who in this house would dare be seen speaking to you ever again? How long would your father be left on his little farm? [*She impatiently throws away the end of her cigaret, and stamps on it*]. Child: you dont know the power such high people have over the like of you and me when we try to rise out of our poverty against them. [*He goes close to her and lowers his voice*]. Look at me, ten years in their service. Do you think I know no secrets? I know things about the mistress that she wouldnt have the master know for a thousand levas I know things about him that she wouldnt let him hear the last of for six months if I blabbed them to her. I know things about Raina that would break off her match with Sergius if —

LOUKA [*turning on him quickly*] How do you know? I never told you!

NICOLA [*opening his eyes cunningly*] So thats your little secret, is it? thought it might be something like that. Well, you take my advice and be respectful; and make the mistress feel that no matter what you know or dont know, she can depend on you to hold your tongue and serve the family faithfully. Thats what they like; and thats how youll make most out of them.

LOUKA [*with searching scorn*] You have the soul of a servant,
Nicola

NICOLA [*complacently*] Yes thats the secret of success in
service

*A loud knocking with a whip handle on a wooden door is heard
from the stable yard*

MALE VOICE OUTSIDE Hollo! Hollo there! Nicola!

LOUKA Master! back from the war!

NICOLA [*quickly*] My word for it, Louka, the war's over Off
with you and get some fresh coffee [*He runs out into the
stable yard*]

LOUKA [*as she collects the coffee pot and cups on the tray, and carries
it into the house*] Youll never put the soul of a servant into
me

*Major Petkoff comes from the stable yard, followed by Nicola
He is a cheerful, excitable, insignificant, unpolished man of about
50, naturally unambitious except as to his income and his import-
ance in local society, but just now greatly pleased with the military
rank which the war has thrust on him as a man of consequence in
his town The fever of plucky patriotism which the Serbian attack
roused in all the Bulgarians has pulled him through the war, but
he is obviously glad to be home again*

PETKOFF [*pointing to the table with his whip*] Breakfast out
here, eh?

NICOLA Yes, sir The mistress and Miss Raina have just
gone in

PETKOFF [*sitting down and taking a roll*] Go in and say Ive
come, and get me some fresh coffee

NICOLA It's coming, sir [*He goes to the house door Louka, with
fresh coffee, a clean cup, and a brandy bottle on her tray, meets
him*] Have you told the mistress?

LOUKA Yes she's coming

Nicola goes into the house Louka brings the coffee to the table

PETKOFF Well the Serbs havnt run away with you, have
they?

LOUKA No, sir

PETKOFF Thats right Have you brought me some cognac?

LOUKA [*putting the bottle on the table*] Here, sir.

PETKOFF. That's right. [*He pours some into his coffee*].

Catherine, who, having at this early hour made only a very perfunctory toilet, wears a Bulgarian apron over a once brilliant but now half worn-out dressing gown, and a colored handkerchief tied over her thick black hair, comes from the house with Turkish slippers on her bare feet, looking astonishingly handsome and stately under all the circumstances. Louka goes into the house

CATHERINE. My dear Paul: what a surprise for us! [*She stoops over the back of his chair to kiss him*]. Have they brought you fresh coffee?

PETKOFF. Yes. Louka's been looking after me. The war's over. The treaty was signed three days ago at Bucharest; and the decree for our army to demobilize was issued yesterday.

CATHERINE [*springing erect, with flashing eyes*] Paul: have you let the Austrians force you to make peace?

PETKOFF [*submissively*] My dear. they didnt consult me. What could I do? [*She sits down and turns away from him*]. But of course we saw to it that the treaty was an honorable one. It declares peace —

CATHERINE [*outraged*] Peace!

PETKOFF [*appeasing her*] — but not friendly relations. remember that. They wanted to put that in; but I insisted on its being struck out. What more could I do?

CATHERINE. You could have annexed Serbia and made Prince Alexander Emperor of the Balkans. That's what I would have done.

PETKOFF. I dont doubt it in the least, my dear. But I should have had to subdue the whole Austrian Empire first, and that would have kept me too long away from you. I missed you greatly.

CATHERINE [*relenting*] Ah! [*She stretches her hand affectionately across the table to squeeze his*].

PETKOFF. And how have you been, my dear?

CATHERINE. Oh, my usual sore throats that's all.

PETKOFF [*with conviction*] That comes from washing your neck every day I've often told you so

CATHERINE Nonsense, Paul!

PETKOFF [*over his coffee and cigaret*] I don't believe in going too far with these modern customs. All this washing can't be good for the health—it's not natural. There was an Englishman at Philippopolis who used to wet himself all over with cold water every morning when he got up. Disgusting! It all comes from the English—their climate makes them so dirty that they have to be perpetually washing themselves. Look at my father! he never had a bath in his life, and he lived to be ninety-eight, the healthiest man in Bulgaria. I don't mind a good wash once a week to keep up my position, but once a day is carrying the thing to a ridiculous extreme.

CATHERINE You are a barbarian at heart still, Paul. I hope you behaved yourself before all those Russian officers.

PETKOFF I did my best. I took care to let them know that we have a library.

CATHERINE Ah, but you didn't tell them that we have an electric bell in it? I have had one put up.

PETKOFF What's an electric bell?

CATHERINE You touch a button, something tinkles in the kitchen, and then Nicola comes up.

PETKOFF Why not shout for him?

CATHERINE Civilized people never shout for their servants. I've learnt that while you were away.

PETKOFF Well, I'll tell you something I've learnt too. Civilized people don't hang out their washing to dry where visitors can see it, so you'd better have all that [*indicating the clothes on the bushes*] put somewhere else.

CATHERINE Oh, that's absurd, Paul. I don't believe really refined people notice such things.

SERGIUS [*knocking at the stable gates*] Gate, Nicola!

PETKOFF There's Sergius [*Shouting*] Hollo, Nicola!

CATHERINE Oh, don't shout, Paul. It really isn't nice.

PETKOFF Bosh! [*He shouts louder than before*] Nicola!

NICOLA [*appearing at the house door*] Yes, sir.

PETKOFF. Are you deaf? Dont you hear Major Saranoff knocking? Bring him round this way. [*He pronounces the name with the stress on the second syllable. Sarahnoff*].

NICOLA. Yes, Major. [*He goes into the stable yard*].

PETKOFF. You must talk to him, my dear, until Raina takes him off our hands. He bores my life out about our not promoting him. Over my head, if you please.

CATHERINE. He certainly ought to be promoted when he marries Raina. Besides, the country should insist on having at least one native general.

PETKOFF. Yes; so that he could throw away whole brigades instead of regiments. It's no use, my dear: he hasnt the slightest chance of promotion until we're quite sure that the peace will be a lasting one.

NICOLA [*at the gate, announcing*] Major Sergius Saranoff! [*He goes into the house and returns presently with a third chair, which he places at the table. He then withdraws*]

Major Sergius Saranoff, the original of the portrait in Raina's room, is a tall romantically handsome man, with the physical hardihood, the high spirit, and the susceptible imagination of an untamed mountaineer chieftain. But his remarkable personal distinction is of a characteristically civilized type. The ridges of his eyebrows, curving with an interrogative twist round the projections at the outer corners; his jealously observant eye; his nose, thin, keen, and apprehensive in spite of the pugnacious high bridge and large nostril; his assertive chin, would not be out of place in a Parisian salon, shewing that the clever imaginative barbarian has an acute critical faculty which has been thrown into intense activity by the arrival of western civilization in the Balkans. The result is precisely what the advent of nineteenth century thought first produced in England. to wit, Byronism. By his brooding on the perpetual failure, not only of others, but of himself, to live up to his ideals, by his consequent cynical scorn for humanity, by his jejune credulity as to the absolute validity of his concepts and the unworthiness of the world in disregarding them; by his wincings and mockeries under the sting of the petty disillusiones which every hour spent among men

brings to his sensitive observation, he has acquired the half tragic, half ironic air, the mysterious moodiness, the suggestion of a strange and terrible history that has left nothing but undying remorse, by which Childe Harold fascinated the grandmothers of his English contemporaries. It is clear that here or nowhere is Raina's ideal hero. Catherine is hardly less enthusiastic about him than her daughter, and much less reserved in shewing her enthusiasm. As he enters from the stable gate, she rises effusively to greet him. Petkoff is distinctly less disposed to make a fuss about him.

PETKOFF Here already, Sergius! Glad to see you

CATHERINE My dear Sergius! [*She holds out both her hands*]

SERGIUS [*kissing them with scrupulous gallantry*] My dear mother, if I may call you so

PETKOFF [*dryly*] Mother-in-law, Sergius mother-in-law! Sit down, and have some coffee

SERGIUS Thank you none for me [*He gets away from the table with a certain distaste for Petkoff's enjoyment of it, and posts himself with conscious dignity against the rail of the steps leading to the house*]

CATHERINE You look superb. The campaign has improved you, Sergius. Everybody here is mad about you. We were all wild with enthusiasm about that magnificent cavalry charge.

SERGIUS [*with grave irony*] Madam, it was the cradle and the grave of my military reputation.

CATHERINE How so?

SERGIUS I won the battle the wrong way when our worthy Russian generals were losing it the right way. In short, I upset their plans, and wounded their self-esteem. Two Cossack colonels had their regiments routed on the most correct principles of scientific warfare. Two major-generals got killed strictly according to military etiquette. The two colonels are now major-generals, and I am still a simple major.

CATHERINE You shall not remain so, Sergius. The women are on your side, and they will see that justice is done you.

SERGIUS. It is too late. I have only waited for the peace to send in my resignation

PETKOFF [*dropping his cup in his amazement*] Your resignation!

CATHERINE. Oh, you must withdraw it!

SERGIUS [*with resolute measured emphasis, folding his arms*] I never withdraw.

PETKOFF [*vexed*] Now who could have supposed you were going to do such a thing?

SERGIUS [*with fire*] Everyone that knew me. But enough of myself and my affairs. How is Raina; and where is Raina?

RAINA [*suddenly coming round the corner of the house and standing at the top of the steps in the path*] Raina is here.

She makes a charming picture as they turn to look at her. She wears an underdress of pale green silk, draped with an overdress of thin ecru canvas embroidered with gold. She is crowned with a dainty eastern cap of gold tinsel. Sergius goes impulsively to meet her. Posing regally, she presents her hand. he drops chivalrously on one knee and kisses it.

PETKOFF [*aside to Catherine, beaming with parental pride*] Pretty, isn't it? She always appears at the right moment.

CATHERINE [*impatiently*] Yes. she listens for it. It is an abominable habit

Sergius leads Raina forward with splendid gallantry. When they arrive at the table, she turns to him with a bend of the head. he bows; and thus they separate, he coming to his place and she going behind her father's chair.

RAINA [*stooping and kissing her father*] Dear father! Welcome home!

PETKOFF [*patting her cheek*] My little pet girl [*He kisses her. She goes to the chair left by Nicola for Sergius, and sits down*].

CATHERINE. And so you're no longer a soldier, Sergius.

SERGIUS. I am no longer a soldier. Soldiering, my dear madam, is the coward's art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong, and keeping out of harm's way when you are weak. That is the whole secret of successful fighting. Get your enemy at a disadvantage, and never, on any account, fight him on equal terms.

PETKOFF They wouldnt let us make a fair stand-up fight of it. However, I suppose soldiering has to be a trade like any other trade.

SERGIUS Precisely. But I have no ambition to shine as a tradesman, so I have taken the advice of that bagman of a captain that settled the exchange of prisoners with us at Pirot, and given it up.

PETKOFF What! that Swiss fellow? Sergius. I've often thought of that exchange since. He over-reached us about those horses.

SERGIUS Of course he over-reached us. His father was a hotel and livery stable keeper, and he owed his first step to his knowledge of horse-dealing. [*With mock enthusiasm*] Ah, he was a soldier every inch a soldier! If only I had bought the horses for my regiment instead of foolishly leading it into danger, I should have been a field-marshal now!

CATHERINE A Swiss? What was he doing in the Serbian army?

PETKOFF A volunteer, of course, keen on picking up his profession. [*Chuckling*] We shouldnt have been able to begin fighting if these foreigners hadnt shewn us how to do it. We knew nothing about it, and neither did the Serbs. Egad, there'd have been no war without them!

RAINA Are there many Swiss officers in the Serbian Army?

PETKOFF No. All Austrians, just as our officers were all Russians. This was the only Swiss I came across. I'll never trust a Swiss again. He humbugged us into giving him fifty able-bodied men for two hundred worn out chargers. They werent even eatable!

SERGIUS We were two children in the hands of that consummate soldier, Major simply two innocent little children.

RAINA What was he like?

CATHERINE Oh, Raina, what a silly question!

SERGIUS He was like a commercial traveller in uniform. Bourgeois to his boots!

PETKOFF [*grinning*] Sergius tell Catherine that queer story.

his friend told us about how he escaped' after Slivnitza. You remember. About his being hid by two women.

SERGIUS [*with bitter irony*] Oh yes: quite a romance! He was serving in the very battery I so unprofessionally charged. Being a thorough soldier, he ran away like the rest of them, with our cavalry at his heels. To escape their sabres he climbed a waterpipe and made his way into the bedroom of a young Bulgarian lady. The young lady was enchanted by his persuasive commercial traveller's manners. She very modestly entertained him for an hour or so, and then called in her mother lest her conduct should appear unmaidenly. The old lady was equally fascinated; and the fugitive was sent on his way in the morning, disguised in an old coat belonging to the master of the house, who was away at the war.

RAINA [*rising with marked stateliness*] Your life in the camp has made you coarse, Sergius. I did not think you would have repeated such a story before me. [*She turns away coldly*].

CATHERINE [*also rising*] She is right, Sergius. If such women exist, we should be spared the knowledge of them.

PETKOFF. Pooh! nonsense! what does it matter?

SERGIUS [*ashamed*] No, Petkoff: I was wrong. [*To Raina, with earnest humility*] I beg your pardon. I have behaved abominably. Forgive me, Raina. [*She bows reservedly*]. And you too, madam. [*Catherine bows graciously and sits down. He proceeds solemnly, again addressing Raina*] The glimpses I have had of the seamy side of life during the last few months have made me cynical; but I should not have brought my cynicism here: least of all into your presence, Raina. I — [*Here, turning to the others, he is evidently going to begin a long speech when the Major interrupts him*].

PETKOFF. Stuff and nonsense, Sergius! That's quite enough fuss about nothing: a soldier's daughter should be able to stand up without flinching to a little strong conversation. [*He rises*] Come: it's time for us to get to business. We have to make up our minds how those three regiments are to get

back to Philippopolis theres no forage for them on the Sofia route [*He goes towards the house*] Come along [*Sergius is about to follow him when Catherine rises and intervenes*]

CATHERINE Oh, Paul, cant you spare Sergius for a few moments? Raina has hardly seen him yet Perhaps I can help you to settle about the regiments

SERGIUS [*protesting*] My dear madam, impossible you –

CATHERINE [*stopping him playfully*] You stay here, my dear Sergius theres no hurry I have a word or two to say to Paul [*Sergius instantly bows and steps back*] Now, dear [*taking Petkoff's arm*] come and see the electric bell

PETKOFF Oh, very well, very well

They go into the house together affectionately Sergius, left alone with Raina, looks anxiously at her, fearing that she is still offended She smiles, and stretches out her arms to him

SERGIUS [*hastening to her*] Am I forgiven?

RAINA [*placing her hands on his shoulders as she looks up at him with admiration and worship*] My hero! My king!

SERGIUS My queen! [*He kisses her on the forehead*]

RAINA How I have envied you, Sergius! You have been out in the world, on the field of battle, able to prove yourself there worthy of any woman in the world, whilst I have had to sit at home inactive – dreaming – useless – doing nothing that could give me the right to call myself worthy of any man

SERGIUS Dearest all my deeds have been yours You inspired me I have gone through the war like a knight in a tournament with his lady looking down at him!

RAINA And you have never been absent from my thoughts for a moment [*Very solemnly*] Sergius I think we two have found the higher love When I think of you, I feel that I could never do a base deed, or think an ignoble thought

SERGIUS My lady and my saint! [*He clasps her reverently*]

RAINA [*returning his embrace*] My lord and my –

SERGIUS Sh – sh! Let me be the worshipper, dear You little know how unworthy even the best man is of a girl's pure passion!

RAINA. I trust you. I love you You will never disappoint me, Sergius. [*Louka is heard singing within the house They quickly release each other*]. I cant pretend to talk indifferently before her: my heart is too full. [*Louka comes from the house with her tray. She goes to the table, and begins to clear it, with her back turned to them*]. I will get my hat; and then we can go out until lunch time. Wouldnt you like that?

SERGIUS. Be quick. If you are away five minutes, it will seem five hours. [*Raina runs to the top of the steps, and turns there to exchange looks with him and wave him a kiss with both hands. He looks after her with emotion for a moment; then turns slowly away, his face radiant with the loftiest exaltation. The movement shifts his field of vision, into the corner of which there now comes the tail of Louka's double apron. His attention is arrested at once. He takes a stealthy look at her, and begins to twirl his moustache mischievously, with his left hand akimbo on his hip. Finally, striking the ground with his heels in something of a cavalry swagger, he strolls over to the other side of the table, opposite her, and says*] Louka: do you know what the higher love is?

LOUKA [*astomshed*] No, sir.

SERGIUS. Very fatiguing thing to keep up for any length of time, Louka. One feels the need of some relief after it.

LOUKA [*innocently*] Perhaps you would like some coffee, sir? [*She stretches her hand across the table for the coffee pot*].

SERGIUS [*taking her hand*] Thank you, Louka.

LOUKA [*pretending to pull*] Oh, sir, you know I didnt mean that I'm surprised at you!

SERGIUS [*coming clear of the table and drawing her with him*] I am surprised at myself, Louka. What would Sergius, the hero of Shvinitza, say if he saw me now? What would Sergius, the apostle of the higher love, say if he saw me now? What would the half dozen Sergiuses who keep popping in and out of this handsome figure of mine say if they caught us here? [*Letting go her hand and slipping his arm dexterously round her waist*] Do you consider my figure handsome, Louka?

LOUKA. Let me go, sir I shall be disgraced. [*She struggles he holds her inexorably*]. Oh, will you let go?

SERGIUS [*looking straight into her eyes*] No

LOUKA Then stand back where we cant be seen Have you
no common sense?

SERGIUS Ah! thats reasonable [*He takes her into the stable
yard gateway, where they are hidden from the house*]

LOUKA [*plaintively*] I may have been seen from the windows
Miss Raina is sure to be spying about after you

SERGIUS [*stung letting her go*] Take care, Louka I may be
worthless enough to betray the higher love, but do not you
insult it

LOUKA [*demurely*] Not for the world, sir, I'm sure May I go
on with my work, please, now?

SERGIUS [*again putting his arm round her*] You are a provoking
little witch, Louka If you were in love with me, would
you spy out of windows on me?

LOUKA Well, you see, sir, since you say you are half a dozen
different gentlemen all at once, I should have a great deal
to look after

SERGIUS [*charmed*] Witty as well as pretty [*He tries to kiss her*]

LOUKA [*avoiding him*] No I dont want your kisses Gentlefolk
are all alike you making love to me behind Miss Raina's
back, and she doing the same behind yours

SERGIUS [*recoiling a step*] Louka!

LOUKA It shews how little you really care

SERGIUS [*dropping his familiarity, and speaking with freezing
politeness*] If our conversation is to continue, Louka, you
will please remember that a gentleman does not discuss the
conduct of the lady he is engaged to with her maid

LOUKA It's so hard to know what a gentleman considers
right I thought from your trying to kiss me that you had
given up being so particular

SERGIUS [*turning from her and striking his forehead as he comes back
into the garden from the gateway*] Devil! devil!

LOUKA Ha! ha! I expect one of the six of you is very like me,
sir, though I am only Miss Raina's maid [*She goes back to
her work at the table, taking no further notice of him*]

SERGIUS [*speaking to himself*] Which of the six is the real man?

thats the question that torments me. One of them is a hero, another a buffoon, another a humbug, another perhaps a bit of a blackguard. [*He pauses, and looks furtively at Louka as he adds, with deep bitterness*] And one, at least, is a coward: jealous, like all cowards. [*He goes to the table*]. Louka.

LOUKA. Yes?

SERGIUS. Who is my rival?

LOUKA. You shall never get that out of me, for love or money.

SERGIUS. Why?

LOUKA. Never mind why. Besides, you would tell that I told you; and I should lose my place.

SERGIUS [*holding out his right hand in affirmation*] No! on the honor of a – [*He checks himself; and his hand drops, nerveless, as he concludes sardonically*] – of a man capable of behaving as I have been behaving for the last five minutes. Who is he?

LOUKA. I dont know. I never saw him. I only heard his voice through the door of her room.

SERGIUS. Damnation! How dare you?

LOUKA [*retreating*] Oh, I mean no harm; youve no right to take up my words like that. The mistress knows all about it. And I tell you that if that gentleman ever comes here again, Miss Raina will marry him, whether he likes it or not. I know the difference between the sort of manner you and she put on before one another and the real manner.

Sergius shivers as if she had stabbed him. Then, setting his face like iron, he strides grimly to her, and grips her above the elbows with both hands.

SERGIUS. Now listen you to me.

LOUKA [*wincing*] Not so tight. youre hurting me.

SERGIUS. That doesnt matter. You have stained my honor by making me a party to your eavesdropping. And you have betrayed your mistress.

LOUKA [*writhing*] Please -

SERGIUS. That shews that you are an abominable little clod of common clay, with the soul of a servant. [*He lets her go*

as if she were an unclean thing, and turns away, dusting his hands of her, to the bench by the wall, where he sits down with averted head, meditating gloomily]

LOUKA [*whimpering angrily with her hands up her sleeves, feeling her bruised arms*] You know how to hurt with your tongue as well as with your hands But I don't care, now I've found out that whatever clay I'm made of, you're made of the same As for her, she's a liar, and her fine airs are a cheat, and I'm worth six of her [*She shakes the pain off hardily, tosses her head, and sets to work to put the things on the tray*]

He looks doubtfully at her She finishes packing the tray, and laps the cloth over the edges, so as to carry all out together As she stoops to lift it, he rises

SERGIUS Louka! [*She stops and looks defiantly at him*] A gentleman has no right to hurt a woman under any circumstances [*With profound humility, uncovering his head*] I beg your pardon

LOUKA That sort of apology may satisfy a lady Of what use is it to a servant?

SERGIUS [*rudely crossed in his chivalry, throws it off with a bitter laugh, and says slightly*] Oh! you wish to be paid for the hurt! [*He puts on his shako, and takes some money from his pocket*]

LOUKA [*her eyes filling with tears in spite of herself*] No I want my hurt made well

SERGIUS [*sobered by her tone*] How?

She rolls up her left sleeve, clasps her arm with the thumb and fingers of her right hand, and looks down at the bruise Then she raises her head and looks straight at him Finally, with a superb gesture, she presents her arm to be kissed Amazed, he looks at her, at the arm, at her again, hesitates, and then, with shuddering intensity, exclaims Never! and gets away as far as possible from her

Her arm drops Without a word, and with unaffected dignity, she takes her tray, and is approaching the house when Raina returns, wearing a hat and jacket in the height of the Vienna fashion of the previous year, 1885 Louka makes way proudly for her, and then goes into the house

RAINA I'm ready. Whats the matter? [*Gaily*] Have you been flirting with Louka?

SERGIUS [*hastily*] No, no. How can you think such a thing?

RAINA [*ashamed of herself*] Forgive me, dear: it was only a jest. I am so happy today.

He goes quickly to her, and kisses her hand remorsefully.

Catherine comes out and calls to them from the top of the steps.

CATHERINE [*coming down to them*] I am sorry to disturb you, children; but Paul is distracted over those three regiments. He doesnt know how to send them to Philippopolis; and he objects to every suggestion of mine. You must go and help him, Sergius. He is in the library.

RAINA [*disappointed*] But we are just going out for a walk.

SERGIUS. I shall not be long. Wait for me just five minutes.

[He runs up the steps to the door].

RAINA [*following him to the foot of the steps and looking up at him with timid coquetry*] I shall go round and wait in full view of the library windows. Be sure you draw father's attention to me. If you are a moment longer than five minutes, I shall go in and fetch you, regiments or no regiments.

SERGIUS [*laughing*] Very well. [*He goes in*].

Raina watches him until he is out of her sight. Then, with a perceptible relaxation of manner, she begins to pace up and down the garden in a brown study.

CATHERINE. Imagine their meeting that Swiss and hearing the whole story! The very first thing your father asked for was the old coat we sent him off in. A nice mess you have got us into!

RAINA [*gazing thoughtfully at the gravel as she walks*] The little beast!

CATHERINE. Little beast! What little beast?

RAINA. To go and tell! Oh, if I had him here, I'd cram him with chocolate creams til he couldnt ever speak again!

CATHERINE. Dont talk such stuff Tell me the truth, Raina. How long was he in your room before you came to me?

RAINA [*whisking round and recommencing her march in the opposite direction*] Oh, I forget.

CATHERINE You cannot forget! Did he really climb up after the soldiers were gone, or was he there when that officer searched the room?

RAINA No Yes I think he must have been there then

CATHERINE You think! Oh, Raina! Raina! Will anything ever make you straightforward? If Sergius finds out, it will be all over between you

RAINA [*with cool impertinence*] Oh, I know Sergius is your pet I sometimes wish you could marry him instead of me You would just suit him You would pet him, and spoil him, and mother him to perfection

CATHERINE [*opening her eyes very widely indeed*] Well, upon my word!

RAINA [*capriciously half to herself*] I always feel a longing to do or say something dreadful to him – to shock his propriety – to scandalize the five senses out of him [*To Catherine, perversely*] I dont care whether he finds out about the chocolate cream soldier or not I half hope he may [*She again turns and strolls slipshantly away up the path to the corner of the house*]

CATHERINE And what should I be able to say to your father, pray?

RAINA [*over her shoulder, from the top of the two steps*] Oh, poor father! As if he could help himself! [*She turns the corner and passes out of sight*]

CATHERINE [*looking after her, her fingers itching*] Oh, if you were only ten years younger! [*Louka comes from the house with a salver, which she carries hanging down by her side*] Well?

LOUKA Theres a gentleman just called, madam A Serbian officer

CATHERINE [*flaming*] A Serb! And how dare he – [*checking herself bitterly*] Oh, I forgot We are at peace now I suppose we shall have them calling every day to pay their compliments Well if he is an officer why dont you tell your master? He is in the library with Major Saranoff Why do you come to me?

LOUKA But he asks for you, madam And I dont think he

knows who you are: he said the lady of the house. He gave me this little ticket for you. [*She takes a card out of her bosom; puts it on the salver; and offers it to Catherine*]

CATHERINE [*reading*] 'Captain Bluntschli'? That's a German name.

LOUKA. Swiss, madam, I think.

CATHERINE [*with a bound that makes Louka jump back*] Swiss! What is he like?

LOUKA [*timidly*] He has a big carpet bag, madam.

CATHERINE. Oh Heavens! he's come to return the coat. Send him away: say we're not at home. ask him to leave his address and I'll write to him. Oh stop: that will never do. Wait! [*She throws herself into a chair to think it out. Louka waits*]. The master and Major Saranoff are busy in the library, arnt they?

LOUKA. Yes, madam.

CATHERINE [*decisively*] Bring the gentleman out here at once. [*Peremptorily*] And be very polite to him. Dont delay Here [*impatiently snatching the salver from her*]: leave that here; and go straight back to him.

LOUKA. Yes, madam [*going*].

CATHERINE. Louka!

LOUKA [*stopping*] Yes, madam.

CATHERINE. Is the library door shut?

LOUKA. I think so, madam.

CATHERINE. If not, shut it as you pass through.

LOUKA. Yes, madam [*going*].

CATHERINE. Stop! [*Louka stops*]. He will have to go that way [*indicating the gate of the stable yard*]. Tell Nicola to bring his bag here after him. Dont forget.

LOUKA [*surprised*] His bag?

CATHERINE. Yes: here: as soon as possible. [*Vehemently*] Be quick! [*Louka runs into the house. Catherine snatches her apron off and throws it behind a bush. She then takes up the salver and uses it as a mirror, with the result that the handkerchief tied round her head follows the apron. A touch to her hair and a shake to her dressing gown make her presentable*]. Oh, how? how? how can a man

be such a fool! Such a moment to select! [*Louka appears at the door of the house, announcing Captain Bluntschli. She stands aside at the top of the steps to let him pass before she goes in again. He is the man of the midnight adventure in Raina's room, clean, well brushed, smartly uniformed, and out of trouble, but still unmistakably the same man. The moment Louka's back is turned, Catherine swoops on him with impetuous, urgent, coaxing appeal.*]
 Captain Bluntschli I am very glad to see you, but you must leave this house at once [*He raises his eyebrows*] My husband has just returned with my future son-in-law, and they know nothing. If they did, the consequences would be terrible. You are a foreigner; you do not feel our national animosities as we do. We still hate the Serbs; the effect of the peace on my husband has been to make him feel like a lion balked of his prey. If he discovers our secret, he will never forgive me, and my daughter's life will hardly be safe. Will you, like the chivalrous gentleman and soldier you are, leave at once before he finds you here?

BLUNTSCHLI [*disappointed, but philosophical*] At once, gracious lady. I only came to thank you and return the coat you lent me. If you will allow me to take it out of my bag and leave it with your servant as I pass out, I need detain you no further [*He turns to go into the house*].

CATHERINE [*catching him by the sleeve*] Oh, you must not think of going back that way [*Coaxing him across to the stable gates*]. This is the shortest way out. Many thanks. So glad to have been of service to you. Good-bye.

BLUNTSCHLI But my bag?

CATHERINE It shall be sent on. You will leave me your address.

BLUNTSCHLI True. Allow me [*He takes out his card-case, and stops to write his address, keeping Catherine in an agony of impatience. As he hands her the card, Petkoff, hatless, rushes from the house in a fluster of hospitality, followed by Sergius*].

PETKOFF [*as he hurries down the steps*] My dear Captain Bluntschli—

CATHERINE Oh Heavens! [*She sinks on the seat against the wall*].

PETKOFF [*too preoccupied to notice her as he shakes Bluntschli's hand heartily*] Those stupid people of mine thought I was out here, instead of in the – haw! – library [*he cannot mention the library without betraying how proud he is of it*]. I saw you through the window. I was wondering why you didnt come in. Saranoff is with me: you remember him, dont you?

SERGIUS [*saluting humorously, and then offering his hand with great charm of manner*] Welcome, our friend the enemy!

PETKOFF. No longer the enemy, happily. [*Rather anxiously*] I hope youve called as a friend, and not about horses or prisoners.

CATHERINE Oh, quite as a friend, Paul. I was just asking Captain Bluntschli to stay to lunch; but he declares he must go at once.

SERGIUS [*sardonically*] Impossible, Bluntschli. We want you here badly We have to send on three cavalry regiments to Philippopolis, and we dont in the least know how to do it.

BLUNTSCHLI [*suddenly attentive and businesslike*] Philippopolis? The forage is the trouble, I suppose.

PETKOFF [*eagerly*] Yes: thats it. [*To Sergius*] He sees the whole thing at once

BLUNTSCHLI I think I can shew you how to manage that.

SERGIUS Invaluable man! Come along! [*Towering over Bluntschli, he puts his hand on his shoulder and takes him to the steps, Petkoff following*].

Raina comes from the house as Bluntschli puts his foot on the first step.

RAINA. Oh! The chocolate cream soldier!

Bluntschli stands rigid. Sergius, amazed, looks at Raina, then at Petkoff, who looks back at him and then at his wife

CATHERINE [*with commanding presence of mind*] My dear Raina, dont you see that we have a guest here? Captain Bluntschli one of our new Serbian friends.

Raina bows. Bluntschli bows.

RAINA How silly of me! [*She comes down into the centre of the group, between Bluntschli and Petkoff*] I made a beautiful ornament this morning for the ice pudding; and that stupid

Nicola has just put down a pile of plates on it and spoilt it
[To Bluntschli, winningly] I hope you didnt think that you
 were the chocolate cream soldier, Captain Bluntschli

BLUNTSCHLI *[laughing]* I assure you I did *[Stealing a whimsical glance at her]* Your explanation was a relief

PETKOFF *[suspiciously, to Raina]* And since when, pray, have
 you taken to cooking?

CATHERINE Oh, whilst you were away It is her latest
 fancy

PETKOFF *[testily]* And has Nicola taken to drinking? He used
 to be careful enough First he shews Captain Bluntschli
 out here when he knew quite well I was in the library, and
 then he goes downstairs and breaks Raina's chocolate
 soldier He must – *[Nicola appears at the top of the steps with
 the bag He descends, places it respectfully before Bluntschli, and
 waits for further orders General amazement Nicola, unconscious
 of the effect he is producing, looks perfectly satisfied with himself
 When Petkoff recovers his power of speech, he breaks out at him
 with]* Are you mad, Nicola?

NICOLA *[taken aback]* Sir?

PETKOFF What have you brought that for?

NICOLA My lady's orders, major Louka told me that –

CATHERINE *[interrupting him]* My orders! Why should I order
 you to bring Captain Bluntschli's luggage out here? What
 are you thinking of, Nicola?

NICOLA *[after a moment's bewilderment, picking up the bag as he
 addresses Bluntschli with the very perfection of servile discretion]* I
 beg your pardon, captain, I am sure *[To Catherine]* My
 fault, madame I hope youll overlook it *[He bows, and is
 going to the steps with the bag, when Petkoff addresses him angrily]*

PETKOFF Youd better go and slam that bag, too, down on
 Miss Raina's ice pudding! *[This is too much for Nicola The
 bag drops from his hand almost on his master's toes, eliciting a
 roar of]* Begone, you butter-fingered donkey

NICOLA *[snatching up the bag, and escaping into the house]* Yes,
 major

CATHERINE Oh, never mind Paul dont be angry

PETKOFF [*blustering*] Scoundrel! He's got out of hand while I was away I'll teach him. Infernal blackguard! The sack next Saturday! I'll clear out the whole establishment – [*He is styled by the caresses of his wife and daughter, who hang round his neck, petting him*].

CATHERINE	}	[<i>together</i>]	{ Now, now, now, it mustnt be angry.
RAINA			{ Wow, wow, wow: not on your first
			{ He meant no harm. Be good to please me,
			dear. Sh-sh-sh-sh!
			{ day at home. I'll make another ice pudding.
			Tch-ch-ch!

PETKOFF [*yielding*] Oh well, never mind. Come, Bluntschli: lets have no more nonsense about going away. You know very well youre not going back to Switzerland yet. Until you do go back youll stay with us.

RAINA. Oh, do, Captain Bluntschli.

PETKOFF [*to Catherine*] Now, Catherine: it's of you he's afraid Press him: and he'll stay

CATHERINE. Of course I shall be only too delighted if [*appealingly*] Captain Bluntschli really wishes to stay. He knows my wishes.

BLUNTSCHLI [*in his driest military manner*] I am at madam's orders.

SERGIUS [*cordially*] That settles it!

PETKOFF [*heartily*] Of course!

RAINA. You see you must stay.

BLUNTSCHLI [*smiling*] Well, if I must, I must.

Gesture of despair from Catherine.

ACT III

In the library after lunch It is not much of a library Its literary equipment consists of a single fixed shelf stocked with old paper covered novels, broken backed, coffee stained, torn and thumbed, and a couple of little hanging shelves with a few gift books on them the rest of the wall space being occupied by trophies of war and the chase But it is a most comfortable sitting room A row of three large windows shews a mountain panorama, just now seen in one of its friendliest aspects in the mellowing afternoon light In the corner next the right hand window a square earthenware stove, a perfect tower of glistening pottery, rises nearly to the ceiling and guarantees plenty of warmth The ottoman is like that in Raina's room, and similarly placed, and the window seats are luxurious with decorated cushions There is one object, however, hopelessly out of keeping with its surroundings This is a small kitchen table, much the worse for wear, fitted as a writing table with an old canister full of pens, an eggcup filled with ink, and a deplorable scrap of heavily used pink blotting paper

At the side of this table, which stands to the left of anyone facing the window, Bluntschli is hard at work with a couple of maps before him, writing orders At the head of it sits Sergius, who is supposed to be also at work, but is actually gnawing the feather of a pen, and contemplating Bluntschli's quick, sure, businesslike progress with a mixture of envious irritation at his own incapacity and awestruck wonder at an ability which seems to him almost miraculous, though its prosaic character forbids him to esteem it The Major is comfortably established on the ottoman, with a newspaper in his hand and the tube of his hookah within easy reach Catherine sits at the stove, with her back to them, embroidering Raina, reclining on the divan, is gazing in a daydream out at the Balkan landscape, with a neglected novel in her lap

The door is on the same side as the stove, farther from the window The button of the electric bell is at the opposite side, behind Bluntschli

PETKOFF [*looking up from his paper to watch how they are getting on at the table*] Are you sure I cant help in any way, Bluntschli?

BLUNTSCHLI [*without interrupting his writing or looking up*]

Quite sure, thank you. Saranoff and I will manage it.

SERGIUS [*grimly*] Yes. we'll manage it. He finds out what to do; draws up the orders; and I sign em Division of labor! [*Bluntschli passes him a paper*] Another one? Thank you. [*He plants the paper squarely before him, sets his chair carefully parallel to it; and signs with his cheek on his elbow and his protruded tongue following the movements of his pen*]. This hand is more accustomed to the sword than to the pen.

PETKOFF. It's very good of you, Bluntschli: it is indeed, to let yourself be put upon in this way. Now are you quite sure I can do nothing?

CATHERINE [*in a low warning tone*] You can stop interrupting, Paul.

PETKOFF [*starting and looking round at her*] Eh? Oh! Quite right, my love quite right [*He takes his newspaper up again, but presently lets it drop*]. Ah, you havnt been campaigning, Catherine: you dont know how pleasant it is for us to sit here, after a good lunch, with nothing to do but enjoy ourselves Theres only one thing I want to make me thoroughly comfortable.

CATHERINE. What is that?

PETKOFF My old coat I'm not at home in this one. I feel as if I were on parade.

CATHERINE. My dear Paul, how absurd you are about that old coat! It must be hanging in the blue closet where you left it.

PETKOFF. My dear Catherine, I tell you Ive looked there Am I to believe my own eyes or not? [*Catherine rises and crosses the room to press the button of the electric bell*] What are you shewing off that bell for? [*She looks at him majestically, and silently resumes her chair and her needlework*]. My dear: if you think the obstinacy of your sex can make a coat out of two old dressing gowns of Raina's, your waterproof, and my mackintosh, youre mistaken. Thats exactly what the blue closet contains at present.

Nicola presents himself

CATHERINE Nicola go to the blue closet and bring your master's old coat here the braided one he wears in the house

NICOLA Yes, madame [*He goes out*]

PETKOFF Catherine

CATHERINE Yes, Paul

PETKOFF I bet you any piece of jewellery you like to order from Sofia against a week's housekeeping money that the coat isn't there

CATHERINE Done, Paul!

PETKOFF [*excited by the prospect of a gamble*] Come here's an opportunity for some sport Wholl bet on it? Bluntschli I'll give you six to one

BLUNTSCHLI [*imperturbably*] It would be robbing you, major Madame is sure to be right [*Without looking up, he passes another bunch of papers to Sergius*].

SERGIUS [*also excited*] Bravo, Switzerland! Major I bet my best charger against an Arab mare for Raina that Nicola finds the coat in the blue closet

PETKOFF [*eagerly*] Your best char –

CATHERINE [*hastily interrupting him*] Dont be foolish, Paul An Arabian mare will cost you 50,000 levas

RAINA [*suddenly coming out of her picturesque reverie*] Really, mother, if you are going to take the jewellery, I dont see why you should grudge me my Arab

Nicola comes back with the coat, and brings it to Petkoff, who can hardly believe his eyes

CATHERINE Where was it, Nicola?

NICOLA Hanging in the blue closet, madame

PETKOFF Well, I am d –

CATHERINE [*stopping him*] Paul!

PETKOFF I could have sworn it wasnt there Age is beginning to tell on me I'm getting hallucinations [*To Nicola*] Here help me to change Excuse me, Bluntschli [*He begins changing coats, Nicola acting as valet*] Remember I didnt take that bet of yours, Sergius Youd better give Raina that Arab steed yourself, since youve roused her expectations

Eh, Raina? [*He looks round at her; but she is again rapt in the landscape With a little gush of parental affection and pride, he points her out to them, and says*] She's dreaming, as usual.

SERGIUS. Assuredly she shall not be the loser.

PETKOFF. So much the better for her. *I shant come off so cheaply, I expect. [The change is now complete Nicola goes out with the discarded coat].* Ah, now I feel at home at last. [*He sits down and takes his newspaper with a grunt of relief*]

BLUNTSCHLI [*to Sergius, handing a paper*] Thats the last order.

PETKOFF [*jumping up*] What! Finished?

BLUNTSCHLI. Finished

PETKOFF [*with childlike envy*] Havnt you anything for me to sign?

BLUNTSCHLI. Not necessary. His signature will do.

PETKOFF [*inflating his chest and thumping it*] Ah well, I think weve done a thundering good day's work. Can I do anything more?

BLUNTSCHLI. You had better both see the fellows that are to take these. [*Sergius rises*] Pack them off at once; and shew them that Ive marked on the orders the time they should hand them in by. Tell them that if they stop to drink or tell stories – if theyre five minutes late, theyll have the skin taken off their backs.

SERGIUS [*stiffening indignantly*] I'll say so. [*He strides to the door*] And if one of them is man enough to spit in my face for insulting him, I'll buy his discharge and give him a pension [*He goes out*].

BLUNTSCHLI [*confidentially*] Just see that he talks to them properly, major, will you?

PETKOFF [*officiously*] Quite right, Bluntschli, quite right. I'll see to it [*He goes to the door importantly, but hesitates on the threshold*]. By the bye, Catherine, you may as well come too. Theyll be far more frightened of you than of me.

CATHERINE [*putting down her embroidery*] I daresay I had better You would only splutter at them [*She goes out, Petkoff holding the door for her and following her*].

BLUNTSCHLI What an army! They make cannons out of

' cherry trees, and the officers send for their wives to keep discipline! [*He begins to fold and docket the papers*]

Raina, who has risen from the divan, marches slowly down the room with her hands clasped behind her, and looks mischievously at him

RAINA You look ever so much nicer than when we last met [*He looks up, surprised*] What have you done to yourself?

BLUNTSCHLI Washed, brushed, good night's sleep and breakfast That's all

RAINA Did you get back safely that morning?

BLUNTSCHLI Quite, thanks

RAINA Were they angry with you for running away from Sergius's charge?

BLUNTSCHLI [*grinning*] No they were glad, because theyd all just run away themselves

RAINA [*going to the table, and leaning over it towards him*] It must have made a lovely story for them all that about me and my room

BLUNTSCHLI Capital story But I only told it to one of them a particular friend

RAINA On whose discretion you could absolutely rely?

BLUNTSCHLI Absolutely

RAINA Hm! He told it all to my father and Sergius the day you exchanged the prisoners [*She turns away and strolls carelessly across to the other side of the room*]

BLUNTSCHLI [*deeply concerned, and half incredulous*] No! You dont mean that, do you?

RAINA [*turning, with sudden earnestness*] I do indeed But they dont know that it was in this house you took refuge If Sergius knew, he would challenge you and kill you in a duel

BLUNTSCHLI Bless me! then dont tell him

RAINA Please be serious, Captain Bluntschli Can you not realize what it is to me to deceive him? I want to be quite perfect with Sergius no meanness, no smallness, no deceit My relation to him is the one really beautiful and noble part of my life I hope you can understand that

BLUNTSCHLI [*sceptically*] You mean that you wouldnt like him to find out that the story about the ice pudding was a - a - a - You know

RAINA [*wincing*] Ah, dont talk of it in that flippant way. I lied I know it But I did it to save your life. He would have killed you. That was the second time I ever uttered a falsehood. [*Bluntschli rises quickly and looks doubtfully and somewhat severely at her*]. Do you remember the first time?

BLUNTSCHLI I! No, Was I present?

RAINA Yes, and I told the officer who was searching for you that you were not present.

BLUNTSCHLI True I should have remembered it.

RAINA [*greatly encouraged*] Ah, it is natural that you should forget it first. It cost you nothing. it cost me a lie! A lie!

She sits down on the ottoman, looking straight before her with her hands clasped round her knee Bluntschli, quite touched, goes to the ottoman with a particularly reassuring and considerate air, and sits down beside her

BLUNTSCHLI. My dear young lady, dont let this worry you. Remember I'm a soldier Now what are the two things that happen to a soldier so often that he comes to think nothing of them? One is hearing people tell lies [*Raina recoils*]. the other is getting his life saved in all sorts of ways by all sorts of people

RAINA [*rising in indignant protest*] And so he becomes a creature incapable of faith and of gratitude.

BLUNTSCHLI [*making a wry face*] Do you like gratitude? I dont If pity is akin to love, gratitude is akin to the other thing

RAINA Gratitude! [*Turning on him*] If you are incapable of gratitude you are incapable of any noble sentiment Even animals are grateful. Oh, I see now exactly what you think of me! You were not surprised to hear me lie. To you it was something I probably did every day! every hour? That is how men think of women. [*She paces the room tragically*]

BLUNTSCHLI [*dubiously*] Theres reason in everything You said youd told only two lies in your whole life. Dear young

LEXY [*surprised*] Coming back already! with the children? I thought they were to stay to the end of the month.

MORELL So they are: she's only coming up for two days, to get some flannel things for Jimmy, and to see how we're getting on without her.

LEXY [*anxiously*] But, my dear Morell, if what Jimmy and Fluffy had was scarlatina, do you think it wise –

MORELL. Scarlatina! Rubbish! it was German measles. I brought it into the house myself from the Pycroft Street school. A parson is like a doctor, my boy: he must face infection as a soldier must face bullets [*He claps Lexy manfully on the shoulders*]. Catch the measles if you can, Lexy she'll nurse you; and what a piece of luck that will be for you! Eh?

LEXY [*smiling uneasily*] It's so hard to understand you about Mrs Morell –

MORELL [*tenderly*] Ah, my boy, get married; get married to a good woman; and then you'll understand. That's a foretaste of what will be best in the Kingdom of Heaven we are trying to establish on earth. That will cure you of dawdling. An honest man feels that he must pay Heaven for every hour of happiness with a good spell of hard unselfish work to make others happy. We have no more right to consume happiness without producing it than to consume wealth without producing it. Get a wife like my Candida; and you'll always be in arrear with your repayment. [*He pats Lexy affectionately and moves to leave the room*].

LEXY Oh, wait a bit. I forgot [*Morell halts and turns with the door knob in his hand*]. Your father-in-law is coming round to see you

Morell, surprised and not pleased, shuts the door again, with a complete change of manner.

MORELL Mr Burgess?

LEXY. Yes I passed him in the park, arguing with somebody. He asked me to let you know that he was coming

MORELL [*half incredulous*] But he hasn't called here for three years. Are you sure, Lexy? You're not joking, are you?

LEXY [*earnestly*] No sir, really

MORELL [*thoughtfully*] Hm! Time for him to take another look at Candida before she grows out of his knowledge [*He resigns himself to the inevitable, and goes out*]

Lexy looks after him with beaming worship Miss Garnett, not being able to shake Lexy, relieves her feelings by worrying the typewriter

LEXY What a good man! What a thorough loving soul he is! [*He takes Morell's place at the table, making himself very comfortable as he takes out a cigaret*]

PROSERPINE [*impatiently, pulling the letter she has been working at off the typewriter and folding it*] Oh, a man ought to be able to be fond of his wife without making a fool of himself about her

LEXY [*shocked*] Oh, Miss Prossy!

PROSERPINE [*snatching at the stationery case for an envelope, in which she encloses the letter as she speaks*] Candida here, and Candida there, and Candida everywhere! [*She licks the envelope*] It's enough to drive anyone out of their senses [*thumping the envelope to make it stick*] to hear a woman raved about in that absurd manner merely because she's got good hair and a tolerable figure

LEXY [*with reproachful gravity*] I think her extremely beautiful, Miss Garnett [*He takes the photograph up, looks at it, and adds, with even greater impressiveness*] extremely beautiful How fine her eyes are!

PROSERPINE Her eyes are not a bit better than mine now! [*He puts down the photograph and stares austere-ly at her*] And you know very well you think me dowdy and second rate enough

LEXY [*rising majestically*] Heaven forbid that I should think of any of God's creatures in such a way! [*He moves stiffly away from her across the room to the neighborhood of the bookcase*]

PROSERPINE [*sarcastically*] Thank you That's very nice and comforting

LEXY [*saddened by her depravity*] I had no idea you had any feeling against Mrs Morell

PROSERPINE [*indignantly*] I have no feeling against her. She's very nice, very good-hearted I'm very fond of her, and can appreciate her real qualities far better than any man can [*He shakes his head sadly. She rises and comes at him with intense pepperiness*] You dont believe me? You think I'm jealous? Oh, what a knowledge of the human heart you have, Mr Lexy Mill! How well you know the weaknesses of Woman, dont you? It must be so nice to be a man and have a fine penetrating intellect instead of mere emotions like us, and to know that the reason we dont share your amorous delusions is that we're all jealous of one another! [*She abandons him with a toss of her shoulders, and crosses to the fire to warm her hands*].

LEXY Ah, if you women only had the same clue to Man's strength that you have to his weakness, Miss Prossy, there would be no Woman Question.

PROSERPINE [*over her shoulder, as she stoops, holding her hands to the blaze*] Where did you hear Morell say that? You didnt invent it yourself youre not clever enough.

LEXY Thats quite true I am not ashamed of owing him that, as I owe him so many other spiritual truths. He said it at the annual conference of the Women's Liberal Federation Allow me to add that though they didnt appreciate it, I, a mere man, did. [*He turns to the bookcase again, hoping that this may leave her crushed*].

PROSERPINE [*putting her hair straight at a panel of mirror in the mantelpiece*] Well, when you talk to me, give me your own ideas, such as they are, and not his You never cut a poorer figure than when you are trying to imitate him.

LEXY [*stung*] I try to follow his example, not to imitate him.

PROSERPINE [*coming at him again on her way back to her work*] Yes, you do you imitate him. Why do you tuck your umbrella under your left arm instead of carrying it in your hand like anyone else? Why do you walk with your chin stuck out before you, hurrying along with that eager look in your eyes? you! who never get up before half past nine in the

morning Why do you say 'knoaledge' in church, though you always say 'knolledge' in private conversation! Bah! do you think I dont know? [*She goes back to the typewriter*] Here! come and set about your work weve wasted enough time for one morning Here's a copy of the diary for today [*She hands him a memorandum*]

LEXY [*deeply offended*] Thank you [*He takes it and stands at the table with his back to her, reading it She begins to transcribe her shorthand notes on the typewriter without troubling herself about his feelings*]

The door opens, and Mr Burgess enters unannounced He is a man of sixty, made coarse and sordid by the compulsory selfishness of petty commerce, and later on softened into sluggish bumptiousness by overfeeding and commercial success A vulgar ignorant guzzling man, offensive and contemptuous to people whose labor is cheap, respectful to wealth and rank, and quite sincere and without rancor or envy in both attitudes The world has offered him no decently paid work except that of a sweater, and he has become, in consequence, somewhat hoggish But he has no suspicion of this himself, and honestly regards his commercial prosperity as the inevitable and socially wholesome triumph of the ability, industry, shrewdness, and experience in business of a man who in private is easygoing, affectionate, and humorously convivial to a fault Corporeally he is podgy, with a snoutish nose in the centre of a flat square face, a dust colored beard with a patch of grey in the centre under his chin, and small watery blue eyes with a plaintively sentimental expression, which he transfers easily to his voice by his habit of pompously intoning his sentences

BURGESS [*stopping on the threshold, and looking round*] They told me Mr Morell was here

PROSERPINE [*rising*] I'll fetch him for you

BURGESS [*staring disappointedly at her*] Youre not the same young lady as hused to typewrite for him?

PROSERPINE No

BURGESS [*grumbling on his way to the hearth-rug*] No she was young-er [*Miss Garnett stares at him, then goes out, slamming the door*] Startin on your rounds, Mr Mill?

LEXY [*folding his memorandum and pocketing it*] Yes: I must be off presently.

BURGESS [*momentously*] Dont let me detain you, Mr Mill
What I come about is private between me and Mr Morell.

LEXY [*huffily*] I have no intention of intruding, I am sure,
Mr Burgess. Good morning

BURGESS [*patronizingly*] Oh, good morning to you.

Morell returns as Lexy is making for the door.

MORELL [*to Lexy*] Off to work?

LEXY. Yes, sir.

MORELL. Take my silk handkerchief and wrap your throat
up. Theres a cold wind. Away with you.

*Lexy, more than consoled for Burgess's rudeness, brightens up
and goes out.*

BURGESS. Spoilin your korates as usu'l, James. Good mor-
nin When I pay a man, an' 'is livin depends on me, I keep
him in 'is place.

MORELL [*rather shortly*] I always keep my curates in their
places as my helpers and comrades. If you get as much
work out of your clerks and warehousemen as I do out of
my curates, you must be getting rich pretty fast Will you
take your old chair.

*He points with curt authority to the armchair beside the fireplace;
then takes the spare chair from the table and sits down at an unfamil-
iar distance from his visitor.*

BURGESS [*without moving*] Just the same as hever, James!

MORELL. When you last called – it was about three years
ago, I think – you said the same thing a little more frankly.
Your exact words then were 'Just as big a fool as ever,
James!'

BURGESS [*soothingly*] Well, praps I did, but [*with conciliatory
cheerfulness*] I meant no hoffence by it A clorgyman is privi-
leged to be a bit of a fool, you know. it's ony becomin in 'is
profession that he should Anyhow, I come here, not to
rake up hold differences, but to let bygones be bygones.
[*Suddenly becoming very solemn, and approaching Morell*] James:
three years ago, you done me a hil turn. You done me hout

of a contrac an when I gev you arsh words in my natral disappointment, you turned my daughtrter again me Well, Ive come to hact the part of a Kerischin [*Offering his hand*] I forgive you, James

MORELL [*starting up*] Confound your impudence!

BURGESS [*retreating, with almost lachrymose deprecation of this treatment*] Is that becomin language for a clorgyman, James? And you so particular, too!

MORELL [*hotly*] No, sir it is not becoming language for a clergyman I used the wrong word I should havesaid damn your impudence thats what St Paul or any honest priest would have said to you Do you think I have forgotten that tender of yours for the contract to supply clothing to the workhouse?

BURGESS [*in a paroxysm of public spirit*] I hacted in the hinterest of the ratepayers, James It was the lowest tender you carnt deny that

MORELL Yes, the lowest, because you paid worse wages than any other employer – starvation wages – aye, worse than starvation wages – to the women who made the clothing Your wages would have driven them to the streets to keep body and soul together [*Getting angrier and angrier*] Those women were my parishioners I shamed the Guardians out of accepting your tender I shamed the ratepayers out of letting them do it I shamed everybody but you [*Boiling over*] How dare you, sir, come here and offer to forgive me, and talk about your daughter, and –

BURGESS Heasy, James! heasy! heasy! Dont git hinto a fluster about nothink Ive howned I was wrong

MORELL Have you? I didn't hear you

BURGESS Of course I did I hown it now Come I harsk your pardon for the letter I wrote you Is that enough?

MORELL [*snapping his fingers*] Thats nothing Have you raised the wages?

BURGESS [*triumphantly*] Yes

MORELL What!

BURGESS [*unctuously*] Ive turned a moddle hemployer I dont

hemploy no women now: theyre all sacked; and the work is done by machinery. Not a man 'as less than sixpence a hour; and the skilled ands gits the Trade Union rate. [*Proudly*] What ave you to say to me now?

MORELL [*overwhelmed*] Is it possible! Well, theres more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth! – [*Going to Burgess with an explosion of apologetic cordiality*] My dear Burgess: how splendid of you! I most heartily beg your pardon for my hard thoughts [*Grasping his hand*] And now, dont you feel the better for the change? Come! confess! youre happier. You look happier.

BURGESS [*ruefully*] Well, praps I do. I spose I must, since you notice it. At all events, I git my contrax assepted by the County Council. [*Savagely*] They dussent ave nothink to do with me unless I paid fair wages: curse em for a parcel o meddlin fools!

MORELL [*dropping his hand, utterly discouraged*] So that was why you raised the wages! [*He sits down moodily*].

BURGESS [*severely, in spreading, mounting tones*] Woy helse should I do it? What does it lead to but drink and huppishness in workin men? [*He seats himself magisterially in the easy chair*]. It's hall very well for you, James: it gits you hinto the papers and makes a great man of you; but you never think of the arm you do, puttin money into the pockets of workin men that they dunno ow to spend, and takin it from people that might be makin a good huse on it.

MORELL [*with a heavy sigh, speaking with cold politeness*] What is your business with me this morning? I shall not pretend to believe that you are here merely out of family sentiment

BURGESS [*obstinately*] Yes I ham: just family sentiment and nothink helse.

MORELL [*with weary calm*] I dont believe you.

BURGESS [*rising threateningly*] Dont say that to me again, James Mavor Morell

MORELL [*unmoved*] I'll say it just as often as may be necessary to convince you that it's true. I dont believe you.

BURGESS [*collapsing into an abyss of wounded feeling*] Oh, well,

if you're determined to be unfriendly, I s'pose I'd better go [*He moves reluctantly towards the door. Morell makes no sign. He lingers.*] I didn't expect to find an unforgiving spirit in you, James [*Morell still not responding, he takes a few more reluctant steps doorwards. Then he comes back, whining.*] We must get on well enough, spite of our different opinions. Why are you so changed to me? I give you my word I come here in peace [*pure*] friendliness, not wishing to be on bad terms with my own daughter's husband. Come, James, be a Kerschman, and shake hands [*He puts his hand sentimentally on Morell's shoulder.*]

MORELL [*looking up at him thoughtfully*] Look here, Burgess. Do you want to be as welcome here as you were before you lost that contract?

BURGESS I do, James. I do – honest.

MORELL Then why don't you behave as you did then?

BURGESS [*cautiously removing his hand*] Oh, d'y'mean?

MORELL I'll tell you. You thought me a young fool then.

BURGESS [*coaxingly*] No, I didn't, James. I –

MORELL [*cutting him short*] Yes, you did. And I thought you an old scoundrel.

BURGESS [*most vehemently deprecating this gross self-accusation on Morell's part*] No, you didn't, James. Now you do yourself a injustice.

MORELL Yes, I did. Well, that did not prevent our getting on very well together. God made you what I call a scoundrel as He made me what you call a fool [*The effect of this observation on Burgess is to remove the keystone of his moral arch. He becomes bodily weak, and, with his eyes fixed on Morell in a helpless stare, puts out his hand apprehensively to balance himself, as if the floor had suddenly sloped under him. Morell proceeds, in the same tone of quiet conviction.*] It was not for me to quarrel with His handiwork in the one case more than in the other. So long as you come here honestly as a self-respecting, thorough, convinced, scoundrel, justifying your scoundrelism and proud of it, you are welcome. But [*and now Morell's tone becomes formidable, and he rises and strikes the back of the*

chair for greater emphasis] I wont have you here snivelling about being a model employer and a converted man when youre only an apostate with your coat turned for the sake of a County Council contract. [*He nods at him to enforce the point; then goes to the hearth-rug, where he takes up a comfortably commanding position with his back to the fire, and continues*] No. I like a man to be true to himself, even in wickedness. Come now: either take your hat and go; or else sit down and give me a good scoundrelly reason for wanting to be friends with me. [*Burgess, whose emotions have subsided sufficiently to be expressed by a dazed grin, is relieved by this concrete proposition. He ponders it for a moment, and then, slowly and very modestly sits down in the chair Morell has just left*]. Thats right. Now out with it.

BURGESS [*chuckling in spite of himself*] Well, you orr a queer bird, James, and no mistake. But [*almost enthusiastically*] one carnt elp likin you. besides, as I said afore, of course one dont take hall a clorgyman says seriously, or the world couldnt go on. Could it now? [*He composes himself for graver discourse, and, turning his eyes on Morell, proceeds with dull seriousness*] Well, I dont mind tellin you, since it's your wish we should be free with one another, that I did think you a bit of a fool once; but I'm beginnin to think that praps I was be'ind the times a bit.

MORELL [*exultant*] Aha! Youre finding that out at last, are you?

BURGESS [*portentously*] Yes. times 'as changed mor'n I could a believed. Five yorr [year] ago, no sensible man would a thought o takin hup with your hidears. I hused to wonder you was let preach at all. Why, I know a clorgyman what 'as bin kep hout of his job for yorrs by the Bishop o London, although the pore feller's not a bit more religious than you are. But today, if hennyone was to horffer to bet me a thousan poun that youll hend by being a bishop yourself, I dussent take the bet. [*Very impressively*] You and your crew are gittin hinfüential. I can see that. Theyll ave to give you somethink someday, if it's honly to stop your mouth.

You ad the right instinc arter all, James the line you took is the payin line in the long run for a man o your sort

MORELL [*offering his hand with thorough decision*] Shake hands, Burgess Now youre talking honestly I dont think theyll make me a bishop, but if they do, I'll introduce you to the biggest jobbers I can get to come to my dinner parties

BURGESS [*who has risen with a sheepish grin and accepted the hand of friendship*] You will ave your joke, James Our quarrel made up now, ain it?

A WOMAN'S VOICE Say yes, James

Startled, they turn quickly and find that Candida has just come in, and is looking at them with an amused maternal indulgence which is her characteristic expression She is a woman of 33, well built, well nourished, likely, one guesses, to become matronly later on, but now quite at her best, with the double charm of youth and motherhood Her ways are those of a woman who has found that she can always manage people by engaging their affection, and who does so frankly and instinctively without the smallest scruple So far, she is like any other pretty woman who is just clever enough to make the most of her sexual attractions for trivially selfish ends, but Candida's serene brow, courageous eyes, and well set mouth and chin signify largeness of mind and dignity of character to ennoble her cunning in the affections A wise-hearted observer, looking at her, would at once guess, that whoever had placed the Virgin of the Assumption over her hearth did so because he fancied some spiritual resemblance between them, and yet would not suspect either her husband or herself of any such idea, or indeed of any concern with the art of Titian

Just now she is in bonnet and mantle, carrying a strapped rug with her umbrella stuck through it, a hand-bag, and a supply of illustrated papers

MORELL [*shocked at his remissness*] Candida! Why – [*he looks at his watch, and is horrified to find it so late*] My darling! [*Hurrying to her and seizing the rug strap, pouring forth his remorseful regrets all the time*] I intended to meet you at the train I let the time slip [*Flinging the rug on the sofa*] I was so engrossed

by – [*returning to her*] – I forgot – oh! [*He embraces her with penitent emotion*].

BURGESS [*a little shamefaced and doubtful of his reception*] How orr you, Candy? [*She, still in Morell's arms, offers him her cheek, which he kisses*]. James and me is come to a nunner-stannin. A honorable unnerstannin. Ain we, James?

MORELL [*impetuously*] Oh bother your understanding! youve kept me late for Candida. [*With compassionate fervor*] My poor love: how did you manage about the luggage? How –

CANDIDA [*stopping him and disengaging herself*] There! there! there! I wasnt alone. Eugene has been down with us; and we travelled together.

MORELL [*pleased*] Eugene!

CANDIDA. Yes: he's struggling with my luggage, poor boy. Go out, dear, at once, or he'll pay for the cab, and I dont want that [*Morell hurries out. Candida puts down her hand-bag; then takes off her mantle and bonnet and puts them on the sofa with the rug, chatting meanwhile*]. Well, papa: how are you getting on at home?

BURGESS. The ouse aint worth livin in since you left it, Candy. I wish youd come round and give the gurl a talkin to. Who's this Eugene thats come with you?

CANDIDA. Oh, Eugene's one of James's discoveries. He found him sleeping on the Embankment last June. Havnt you noticed our new picture [*pointing to the Virgin*]? He gave us that.

BURGESS [*incredulously*] Garn! D'you mean to tell me – your hown father! – that cab touts or such like, orf the Embankment, buys pictures like that? [*Severely*] Dont deceive me, Candy: it's a 'Igh Church picture; and James chose it himself

CANDIDA. Guess again. Eugene isnt a cab tout.

BURGESS. Then what is he? [*Sarcastically*] A nobleman, I spose.

CANDIDA [*nodding delightedly*] Yes. His uncle's a peer! A real live earl.

BURGESS [*not daring to believe such good news*] No!

CANDIDA Yes He had a seven day bill for £55 in his pocket when James found him on the Embankment He thought he couldnt get any money for it until the seven days were up, and he was too shy to ask for credit Oh, he's a dear boy! We are very fond of him

BURGESS [*pretending to belittle the aristocracy, but with his eyes gleaming*] Hm! I thort you wouldnt git a hearl's nevvv visitin in Victawiar Pawrk unless he were a bit of a flat [*Looking again at the picture*] Of course I dont old with that picture, Candy, but still it's a 'igh class sust rate work of ort I can see that Be sure you hintrodooce me to im, Candy [*He looks at his watch anxiously*] I can ony stay about two minutes

Morell comes back with Eugene, whom Burgess contemplates moist-eyed with enthusiasm He is a strange, shy youth of eighteen, slight, effeminate, with a delicate childish voice, and a hunted tormented expression and shrinking manner that shew the painful sensitiveness of very swift and acute apprehensiveness in youth, before the character has grown to its full strength Miserably irresolute, he does not know where to stand or what to do He is afraid of Burgess, and would run away into solitude if he dared, but the very intensity with which he feels a perfectly commonplace position comes from excessive nervous force, and his nostrils, mouth, and eyes betray a fiercely petulant wilfulness, as to the bent of which his brow, already lined with pity, is reassuring He is so uncommon as to be almost unearthly, and to prosaic people there is something noxious in this unearthliness, just as to poetic people there is something angelic in it His dress is anarchic He wears an old blue serge jacket, unbuttoned, over a woollen lawn tennis shirt, with a silk handkerchief for a cravat, trousers matching the jacket, and brown canvas shoes In these garments he has apparently lain in the heather and waded through the waters, and there is no evidence of his having ever brushed them

As he catches sight of a stranger on entering, he stops, and edges along the wall on the opposite side of the room

MORLELL [*as he enters*] Come along you can spare us quarter

of an hour at all events This is my father-in-law Mr Burgess — Mr Marchbanks

MARCHBANKS [*nervously backing against the bookcase*] Glad to meet you, sir.

BURGESS [*crossing to him with great heartiness, whilst Morell joins Candida at the fire*] Glad to meet you, I'm shore, Mr Morchbanks [*Forcing him to shake hands*] Ow do you find yoreself this weather? Ope you aint lettin James put no foolish ideas into your ed?

MARCHBANKS Foolish ideas? Oh, you mean Socialism? No.

BURGESS. Thats right [*Again looking at his watch*] Well, I must go now theres no elp for it. Yore not comin my way, orr you, Mr Morchbanks?

MARCHBANKS. Which way is that?

BURGESS Victawriar Pawrk Station Theres a city train at
12 25

MORELL Nonsense. Eugene will stay to lunch with us, I expect.

MARCHBANKS [*anxiously excusing himself*] No — I — I —

BURGESS Well, well, I shornt press you I bet youd rather lunch with Candy. Some night, I ope, youll come and dine with me at my club, the Freeman Founders in Nortn Folgit Come: say you will!

MARCHBANKS Thank you, Mr Burgess. Where is Norton Folgate Down in Surrey, isnt it?

Burgess, inexpressibly tickled, begins to splutter with laughter

CANDIDA [*coming to the rescue*] Youll lose your train, papa, if you dont go at once Come back in the afternoon and tell Mr Marchbanks where to find the club.

BURGESS [*roaring with glee*] Down in Surrey! Har, har! thats not a bad one Well, I never met a man as didnt know Nortn Folgit afore [*Abashed at his own noisiness*] Goodbye, Mr Morchbanks I know yore too ighbred to take my pleasantry in bad part [*He again offers his hand*]

MARCHBANKS [*taking it with a nervous jerk*] Not at all

BURGESS Bye, bye, Candy I'll look in again later on So long, James

MORELL Must you go?

BURGESS Dont stir [*He goes out with unabated heartiness*]

MORELL Oh, I'll see you off [*He follows him*]

Eugene stares after them apprehensively, holding his breath until Burgess disappears

CANDIDA [*laughing*] Well, Eugene? [*He turns with a start, and comes eagerly towards her, but stops irresolutely as he meets her amused look*] What do you think of my father?

MARCHBANKS I – I hardly know him yet He seems to be a very nice old gentleman

CANDIDA [*with gentle irony*] And you'll go to the Freeman Founders to dine with him, wont you?

MARCHBANKS [*miserably, taking it quite seriously*] Yes, if it will please you

CANDIDA [*touched*] Do you know, you are a very nice boy, Eugene, with all your queerness If you had laughed at my father I shouldnt have minded, but I like you ever so much better for being nice to him

MARCHBANKS Ought I to have laughed? I noticed that he said something funny, but I am so ill at ease with strangers, and I never can see a joke I'm very sorry [*He sits down on the sofa, his elbows on his knees and his temples between his fists with an expression of hopeless suffering*]

CANDIDA [*busling him goodnaturedly*] Oh come! You great baby, you! You are worse than usual this morning Why were you so melancholy as we came along in the cab?

MARCHBANKS Oh, that was nothing I was wondering how much I ought to give the cabman I know it's utterly silly, but you dont know how dreadful such things are to me – how I shrink from having to deal with strange people [*Quickly and reassuringly*] But it's all right He beamed all over and touched his hat when Morell gave him two shillings I was on the point of offering him ten

Morell comes back with a few letters and newspapers which have come by the middy post

CANDIDA Oh, James dear, he was going to give the cabman

ten shillings! ten shillings for a three minutes drive! Oh dear!

MORELL [*at the table, glancing through the letters*] Never mind her, Marchbanks. The overpaying instinct is a generous one: better than the underpaying instinct, and not so common.

MARCHBANKS [*relapsing into dejection*] No cowardice, incompetence Mrs Morell's quite right.

CANDIDA Of course she is [*She takes up her hand-bag*] And now I must leave you to James for the present I suppose you are too much of a poet to know the state a woman finds her house in when she's been away for three weeks. Give me my rug [*Eugene takes the strapped rug from the couch, and gives it to her She takes it in her left hand, having the bag in her right*] Now hang my cloak across my arm [*He obeys*]. Now my hat. [*He puts it into the hand which has the bag*]. Now open the door for me. [*He hurries before her and opens the door*]. Thanks [*She goes out, and Marchbanks shuts the door*].

MORELL [*still busy at the table*] You'll stay to lunch, Marchbanks of course.

MARCHBANKS [*scared*] I mustnt [*He glances quickly at Morell, but at once avoids his frank look, and adds, with obvious dissingenuousness*] I mean I cant.

MORELL. You mean you wont.

MARCHBANKS [*earnestly*] No I should like to, indeed Thank you very much But – but –

MORELL But – but – but – but – Bosh! If you'd like to stay, stay. If you're shy, go and take a turn in the park and write poetry until half past one; and then come in and have a good feed

MARCHBANKS Thank you, I should like that very much But I really mustnt The truth is, Mrs Morell told me not to. She said she didnt think you'd ask me to stay to lunch, but that I was to remember, if you did, that you didnt really want me to [*Plaintively*] She said I'd understand; but I dont. Please dont tell her I told you.

MORELL [*drolly*] Oh, is that all? Wont my suggestion that you

should take a turn in the park meet the difficulty?

MARCHBANKS How?

MORELL [*exploding good-humoredly*] Why, you duffer – [*But this boisterousness jars himself as well as Eugene He checks himself*] No I wont put it in that way [*He comes to Eugene with affectionate seriousness*] My dear lad in a happy marriage like ours, there is something very sacred in the return of the wife to her home [*Marchbanks looks quickly at him, half anticipating his meaning*] An old friend or a truly noble and sympathetic soul is not in the way on such occasions, but a chance visitor is [*The hunted horror-stricken expression comes out with sudden vividness in Eugene's face as he understands Morell, occupied with his own thoughts, goes on without noticing this*] Candida thought I would rather not have you here, but she was wrong I'm very fond of you, my boy, and I should like you to see for yourself what a happy thing it is to be married as I am

MARCHBANKS Happy! Your marriage! You think that! You believe that!

MORELL [*buoyantly*] I know it, my lad Laroche foucauld said that there are convenient marriages but no delightful ones You dont know the comfort of seeing through and through a thundering liar and rotten cynic like that fellow Ha! ha! Now, off with you to the park, and write your poem Half past one, sharp, mind we never wait for anybody

MARCHBANKS [*wildly*] No stop you shant I'll force it into the light

MORELL [*puzzled*] Eh? Force what?

MARCHBANKS I must speak to you There is something that must be settled between us

MORLLL [*with a whimsical glance at his watch*] Now?

MARCHBANKS [*passionately*] Now Before you leave this room [*He retreats a few steps, and stands as if to bar Morell's way to the door*]

MORELL [*without moving, and gravely, perceiving now that there is something serious the matter*] I'm not going to leave it, my dear boy! I thought you were [*Eugene, baffled by his firm tone, turns*]

his back on him, writhing with anger. Morell goes to him and puts his hand on his shoulder strongly and kindly, disregarding his attempt to shake it off]. Come sit down quietly; and tell me what it is. And remember we are friends, and need not fear that either of us will be anything but patient and kind to the other, whatever we may have to say.

MARCHBANKS [*twisting himself round on him*] Oh, I am not forgetting myself: I am only [*covering his face desperately with his hands*] full of horror. [*Then, dropping his hands, and thrusting his face forward fiercely at Morell, he goes on threateningly*] You shall see whether this is a time for patience and kindness. [*Morell, firm as a rock, looks indulgently at him*]. Don't look at me in that self-complacent way. You think yourself stronger than I am, but I shall stagger you if you have a heart in your breast

MORELL [*powerfully confident*] Stagger me, my boy. Out with it.

MARCHBANKS. First —

MORELL First?

MARCHBANKS. I love your wife.

Morell recoils, and, after staring at him for a moment in utter amazement, bursts into uncontrollable laughter. Eugene is taken aback; but not disconcerted, and he soon becomes indignant and contemptuous

MORELL [*sitting down to have his laugh out*] Why, my dear child, of course you do. Everybody loves her. They can't help it. I like it. But [*looking up jocosely at him*] I say, Eugene. do you think yours is a case to be talked about? You're under twenty: she's over thirty. Doesn't it look rather too like a case of calf love?

MARCHBANKS [*vehemently*] You dare say that of her! You think that way of the love she inspires! It is an insult to her!

MORELL [*rising quickly, in an altered tone*] To her! Eugene take care. I have been patient. I hope to remain patient. But there are some things I won't allow. Don't force me to shew you the indulgence I should shew to a child. Be a man.

MARCHBANKS [*with a gesture as if sweeping something behind*

him] Oh, let us put aside all that cant It horrifies me when I think of the doses of it she has had to endure in all the weary years during which you have selfishly and blindly sacrificed her to minister to yourself-sufficiency you! [*turning on him*] who have not one thought – one sense – in common with her

MORELL [*philosophically*] She seems to bear it pretty well [*Looking him straight in the face*] Eugene, my boy you are making a fool of yourself a very great fool of yourself There's a piece of wholesome plain speaking for you [*He knocks in the lesson with a nod in his old way, and posts himself on the hearthrug, holding his hands behind him to warm them*]

MARCHBANKS Oh, do you think I don't know all that? Do you think that the things people make fools of themselves about are any less real and true than the things they behave sensibly about? [*Morell's gaze wavers for the first time He forgets to warm his hands, and stands listening, startled and thoughtful*] They are more true they are the only things that are true You are very calm and sensible and moderate with me because you can see that I am a fool about your wife, just as no doubt that old man who was here just now is very wise over your Socialism, because he sees that you are a fool about it [*Morell's perplexity deepens markedly Eugene follows up his advantage, plying him fiercely with questions*] Does that prove you wrong? Does your complacent superiority to me prove that I am wrong?

MORELL Marchbanks some devil is putting these words into your mouth It is easy – terribly easy – to shake a man's faith in himself To take advantage of that to break a man's spirit is devil's work Take care of what you are doing Take care

MARCHBANKS [*ruthlessly*] I know I'm doing it on purpose I told you I should stagger you

They confront one another threateningly for a moment Then Morell recovers his dignity

MORELL [*with noble tenderness*] Eugene listen to me Some day, I hope and trust, you will be a happy man like me

[*Eugene chafes intolerantly, repudiating the worth of his happiness. Morell, deeply insulted, controls himself with fine forbearance, and continues steadily with great artistic beauty of delivery*] You will be married; and you will be working with all your might and valor to make every spot on earth as happy as your own home. You will be one of the makers of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth; and -- who knows? -- you may be a master builder where I am only a humble journeyman; for don't think, my boy, that I cannot see in you, young as you are, promise of higher powers than I can ever pretend to. I well know that it is in the poet that the holy spirit of man -- the god within him -- is most godlike. It should make you tremble to think of that -- to think that the heavy burthen and great gift of a poet may be laid upon you.

MARCHBANKS [*unimpressed and remorseless, his boyish crudity of assertion telling sharply against Morell's oratory*] It does not make me tremble. It is the want of it in others that makes me tremble.

MORELL [*redoubling his force of style under the stimulus of his genuine feeling and Eugene's obduracy*] Then help to kindle it in them -- in me -- not to extinguish it. In the future, when you are as happy as I am, I will be your true brother in the faith. I will help you to believe that God has given us a world that nothing but our own folly keeps from being a paradise. I will help you to believe that every stroke of your work is sowing happiness for the great harvest that all -- even the humblest -- shall one day reap. And last, but trust me, not least, I will help you to believe that your wife loves you and is happy in her home. We need such help, Marchbanks: we need it greatly and always. There are so many things to make us doubt, if once we let our understanding be troubled. Even at home, we sit as if in camp, encompassed by a hostile army of doubts. Will you play the traitor and let them in on me?

MARCHBANKS [*looking round wildly*] Is it like this for her here always? A woman, with a great soul, craving for reality, truth, freedom, and being fed on metaphors, sermons, stale

perorations, mere rhetoric Do you think a woman's soul can live on your talent for preaching?

MORELL [*stung*] Marchbanks you make it hard for me to control myself My talent is like yours insofar as it has any real worth at all It is the gift of finding words for divine truth

MARCHBANKS [*impetuously*] It's the gift of the gab, nothing more and nothing less What has your knack of fine talking to do with the truth, any more than playing the organ has? I've never been in your church, but I've been to your political meetings, and I've seen you do what's called rousing the meeting to enthusiasm that is, you excited them until they behaved exactly as if they were drunk And their wives looked on and saw what fools they were Oh, it's an old story you'll find it in the Bible I imagine King David, in his fits of enthusiasm, was very like you [*Stabbing him with the words*] 'But his wife despised him in her heart'

MORELL [*wrathfully*] Leave my house Do you hear? [*He advances on him threateningly*]

MARCHBANKS [*shrinking back against the couch*] Let me alone Don't touch me [*Morell grasps him powerfully by the lapel of his coat he cowers down on the sofa and screams passionately*] Stop, Morell if you strike me, I'll kill myself I won't bear it [*Almost in hysterics*] Let me go Take your hand away

MORELL [*with slow emphatic scorn*] You little snivelling, cowardly whelp [*He releases him*] Go, before you frighten yourself into a fit

MARCHBANKS [*on the sofa, gasping, but relieved by the withdrawal of Morell's hand*] I'm not afraid of you it's you who are afraid of me

MORELL [*quietly, as he stands over him*] It looks like it, doesn't it?

MARCHBANKS [*with petulant vehemence*] Yes, it does [*Morell turns away contemptuously Eugene scrambles to his feet and follows him*] You think because I shrink from being brutally handled – because [*with tears in his voice*] I can do nothing but cry with rage when I am met with violence – because I can't lift a heavy trunk down from the top of a cab like you –

because I cant fight you for your wife as a drunken navvy would. all that makes you think I'm afraid of you. But youre wrong. If I havnt got what you call British pluck, I havnt British cowardice either: I'm not afraid of a clergyman's ideas I'll fight your ideas. I'll rescue her from her slavery to them. I'll pit my own ideas against them You are driving me out of the house because you darent let her choose between your ideas and mine. You are afraid to let me see her again [*Morell, angered, turns suddenly on him. He flies to the door in involuntary dread*]. Let me alone, I say I'm going.

MORELL [*with cold scorn*] Wait a moment: I am not going to touch you dont be afraid. When my wife comes back she will want to know why you have gone. And when she finds that you are never going to cross our threshold again, she will want to have that explained too. Now I dont wish to distress her by telling her that you have behaved like a blackguard.

MARCHBANKS [*coming back with renewed vehemence*] You shall. You must. If you give any explanation but the true one, you are a liar and a coward Tell her what I said; and how you were strong and manly, and shook me as a terrier shakes a rat; and how I shrank and was terrified; and how you called me a snivelling little whelp and put me out of the house If you dont tell her, I will I'll write it to her.

MORELL [*puzzled*] Why do you want her to know this?

MARCHBANKS [*with lyric rapture*] Because she will understand me, and know that I understand her. If you keep back one word of it from her – if you are not ready to lay the truth at her feet as I am – then you will know to the end of your days that she really belongs to me and not to you. Goodbye. [*Going*].

MORELL [*terribly disquieted*] Stop. I will not tell her.

MARCHBANKS [*turning near the door*] Either the truth or a lie you must tell her, if I go.

MORELL [*temporizing*] Marchbanks it is sometimes justifiable –

CANDIDA

MARCHBANKS [*cutting him short*] I know to lie It will be useless Goodbye, Mr Clergyman

As he turns to the door, it opens and Candida enters in her housekeeping dress

CANDIDA Are you going, Eugene? [*Looking more observantly at him*] Well, dear me, just look at you, going out into the street in that state! You are a poet, certainly Look at him, James! [*She takes him by the coat, and brings him forward, shewing him to Morell*] Look at his collar! look at his tie! look at his hair! One would think somebody had been throttling you [*Eugene instinctively rises to look round at Morell, but she pulls him back*] Here! Stand still [*She buttons his collar, ties his neckerchief in a bow, and arranges his hair*] There! Now you look so nice that I think you'd better stay to lunch after all, though I told you you mustnt It will be ready in half an hour [*She puts a final touch to the bow He kisses her hand*] Dont be silly

MARCHBANKS I want to stay, of course, unless the reverend gentleman your husband has anything to advance to the contrary

CANDIDA Shall he stay, James, if he promises to be a good boy and help me to lay the table?

MORELL [*shortly*] Oh yes, certainly he had better [*He goes to the table and pretends to busy himself with his papers there*]

MARCHBANKS [*offering his arm to Candida*] Come and lay the table [*She takes it They go to the door together As they pass out he adds*] I am the happiest of mortals

MORELL So was I – an hour ago

ACT II

The same day later in the afternoon. The same room. The chair for visitors has been replaced at the table Marchbanks, alone and idle, is trying to find out how the typewriter works. Hearing someone at the door, he steals guiltily away to the window and pretends to be absorbed in the view. Miss Garnett, carrying the notebook in which she takes down Morell's letters in shorthand from his dictation, sits down at the typewriter and sets to work transcribing them, much too busy to notice Eugene. When she begins the second line she stops and stares at the machine. Something wrong evidently.

PROSERPINE. Bother! Youve been meddling with my typewriter, Mr Marchbanks, and theres not the least use in your trying to look as if you hadnt.

MARCHBANKS [*timidly*] I'm very sorry, Miss Garnett. I only tried to make it write. [*Plaintively*] But it wouldnt.

PROSERPINE. Well, youve altered the spacing.

MARCHBANKS [*earnestly*] I assure you I didnt. I didnt indeed. I only turned a little wheel. It gave a sort of click.

PROSERPINE. Oh, now I understand. [*She restores the spacing, talking volubly all the time*]. I suppose you thought it was a sort of barrel-organ. Nothing to do but turn the handle, and it would write a beautiful love letter for you straight off, eh?

MARCHBANKS [*seriously*] I suppose a machine could be made to write love letters. Theyre all the same, arnt they?

PROSERPINE [*somewhat indignantly: any such discussion, except by way of pleasantry, being outside her code of manners*] How do I know? Why do you ask me?

MARCHBANKS. I beg your pardon. I thought clever people – people who can do business and write letters and that sort of thing – always had to have love affairs to keep them from going mad.

PROSERPINE [*rising, outraged*] Mr Marchbanks! [*She looks severely at him, and marches majestically to the bookcase*]

MARCHBANKS [*approaching her humbly*] I hope I havnt offended

you Perhaps I shouldnt have alluded to your love affairs

PROSERPINE [*plucking a blue book from the shelf and turning sharply on him*] I havnt any love affairs How dare you say such a thing? The idea! [*She tucks the book under her arm, and is flouncing back to her machine when he addresses her with awakened interest and sympathy*]

MARCHBANKS Really! Oh, then you are shy, like me

PROSERPINE Certainly I am not shy What do you mean?

MARCHBANKS [*secretly*] You must be that is the reason there are so few love affairs in the world We all go about longing for love it is the first need of our natures, the first prayer of our hearts, but we dare not utter our longing we are too shy [*Very earnestly*] Oh, Miss Garnett, what would you not give to be without fear, without shame –

PROSERPINE [*scandalized*] Well, upon my word!

MARCHBANKS [*with petulant impatience*] Ah, dont say those stupid things to me they dont deceive me what use are they? Why are you afraid to be your real self with me? I am just like you

PROSERPINE Like me! Pray are you flattering me or flattering yourself? I dont feel quite sure which [*She again rises to get back to her work*]

MARCHBANKS [*stopping her mysteriously*] Hush! I go about in search of love, and I find it in unmeasured stores in the bosoms of others But when I try to ask for it, this horrible shyness strangles me, and I stand dumb, or worse than dumb, saying meaningless things foolish lies And I see the affection I am longing for given to dogs and cats and pet birds, because they come and ask for it [*Almost whispering*] It must be asked for it is like a ghost it cannot speak unless it is first spoken to [*At his usual pitch, but with deep melancholy*] All the love in the world is longing to speak, only it dare not, because it is shy! shy! shy! That is the world's tragedy [*With a deep sigh he sits in the visitors' chair and buries his face in his hands*]

PROSERPINE [*amazed, but keeping her wits about her her point of*

honor in encounters with strange young men] Wicked people get over that shyness occasionally, dont they?

MARCHBANKS [*scrambling up almost fiercely*] Wicked people means people who have no love: therefore they have no shame. They have the power to ask love because they dont need it: they have the power to offer it because they have none to give [*He collapses into his seat, and adds, mournfully*] But we, who have love, and long to mingle it with the love of others: we cannot utter a word [*Timidly*] You find that, dont you?

PROSERPINE. Look here: if you dont stop talking like this, I'll leave the room, Mr Marchbanks I really will. It's not proper.

She resumes her seat at the typewriter, opening the blue book and preparing to copy a passage from it

MARCHBANKS [*hopelessly*] Nothing thats worth saying is proper. [*He rises, and wanders about the room in his lost way*]. I cant understand you, Miss Garnett. What am I to talk about?

PROSERPINE [*snubbing him*] Talk about indifferent things. Talk about the weather.

MARCHBANKS Would you talk about indifferent things if a child were by, crying bitterly with hunger?

PROSERPINE. I suppose not

MARCHBANKS. Well: I cant talk about indifferent things with my heart crying out bitterly in its hunger.

PROSERPINE. Then hold your tongue.

MARCHBANKS. Yes: that is what it always comes to. We hold our tongues. Does that stop the cry of your heart? for it does cry. doesnt it? It must, if you have a heart.

PROSERPINE [*suddenly rising with her hand pressed on her heart*] Oh, it's no use trying to work while you talk like that. [*She leaves her little table and sits on the sofa. Her feelings are keenly stirred*] It's no business of yours whether my heart cries or not; but I have a mind to tell you, for all that.

MARCHBANKS You neednt. I know already that it must

PROSERPINE. But mind! if you ever say I said so, I'll deny it

MARCHBANKS [*compassionately*] Yes, I know And so you havnt the courage to tell him?

PROSERPINE [*bouncing up*] Him! Who?

MARCHBANKS Whoever he is The man you love It might be anybody The curate, Mr Mill, perhaps

PROSERPINE [*with disdain*] Mr Mill!!! A fine man to break my heart about, indeed! I'd rather have you than Mr Mill

MARCHBANKS [*recoiling*] No, really I'm very sorry, but you mustnt think of that I -

PROSERPINE [*testily, going to the fireplace and standing at it with her back to him*] Oh, dont be frightened it's not you It's not any one particular person

MARCHBANKS I know You feel that you could love anybody that offered -

PROSERPINE [*turning, exasperated*] Anybody that offered! No, I do not What do you take me for?

MARCHBANKS [*discouraged*] No use You wont make me real answers only those things that everybody says [*He strays to the sofa and sits down disconsolately*]

PROSERPINE [*nettled at what she takes to be a disparagement of her manners by an aristocrat*] Oh well, if you want original conversation, youd better go and talk to yourself

MARCHBANKS That is what all poets do they talk to themselves out loud, and the world overhears them But it's horribly lonely not to hear someone else talk sometimes

PROSERPINE Wait until Mr Morell comes He'll talk to you [*Marchbanks shudders*] Oh, you neednt make wry faces over him he can talk better than you [*With temper*] He'd talk your little head off [*She is going back angrily to her place, when he, suddenly enlightened, springs up and stops her*]

MARCHBANKS Ah! I understand now

PROSERPINE [*reddening*] What do you understand?

MARCHBANKS Your secret Tell me is it really and truly possible for a woman to love him?

PROSERPINE [*as if this were beyond all bounds*] Well!!

MARCHBANKS [*passionately*] No answer me I want to know I must know I cant understand it I can see nothing in

him but words, pious resolutions, what people call goodness. You cant love that

PROSERPINE [*attempting to snub him by an air of cool propriety*] I simply dont know what youre talking about I dont understand you.

MARCHBANKS [*vehemently*] You do. You lie.

PROSERPINE. Oh!

MARCHBANKS You do understand; and you know. [*Determined to have an answer*] Is it possible for a woman to love him?

PROSERPINE [*looking him straight in the face*] Yes. [*He covers his face with his hands*] Whatever is the matter with you! [*He takes down his hands* *Frightened at the tragic mask presented to her, she hurries past him at the utmost possible distance, keeping her eyes on his face until he turns from her and goes to the child's chair beside the hearth, where he sits in the deepest dejection. As she approaches the door, it opens and Burgess enters* *Seeing him, she ejaculates*] Praise heaven! here's somebody [*and feels safe enough to resume her place at her table. She puts a fresh sheet of paper into the typewriter as Burgess crosses to Eugene*]

BURGESS [*bent on taking care of the distinguished visitor*] Well· so this is the way they leave you to yourself, Mr Morchbanks I've come to keep you company. [*Marchbanks looks up at him in consternation, which is quite lost on him*] James is receivin a deppitation in the dinin room; and Candy is hupstairs heducating of a young stitcher gurl she's hinterested in [*Condolingly*] You must find it lonesome here with no one but the typist to talk to [*He pulls round the easy chair, and sits down*].

PROSERPINE [*highly incensed*] He'll be all right now that he has the advantage of your polished conversation· thats one comfort, anyhow. [*She begins to typewrite with clattering asperity*].

BURGESS [*amazed at her audacity*] Hi was not addressin myself to you, young woman, that I'm awerr of.

PROSERPINE. Did you ever see worse manners, Mr Marchbanks?

BURGESS [*with pompous severity*] Mr Morchbanks is a gentleman, and knows his place, which is more than some people do

PROSERPINE [*fretfully*] It's well you and I are not ladies and gentlemen I'd talk to you pretty straight if Mr Marchbanks wasnt here [*She pulls the letter out of the machine so crossly that it tears*] There! now I've spoiled this letter! have to be done all over again! Oh, I cant contain myself silly old fathead!

BURGESS [*rising, breathless with indignation*] Ho! I'm a silly ole fat'ead, am I? Ho, indeed [*gasping*]! Hall right, my gurl! Hall right You just wait till I tell that to yore hemployer Youll see I'll teach you see if I dont

PROSERPINE [*conscious of having gone too far*] I -

BURGESS [*cutting her short*] No youve done it now No huse a-talkin to me I'll let you know who I am [*Proserpine shifts her paper carriage with a defiant bang, and disdainfully goes on with her work*] Dont you take no notice of her, Mr Morchbanks She's beneath it [*He loftily sits down again*]

MARCHBANKS [*miserably nervous and disconcerted*] Hadnt we better change the subject? I - I dont think Miss Garnett meant anything

PROSERPINE [*with intense conviction*] Oh, didnt I though, just!

BURGESS I wouldnt demean myself to take notice on her
An electric bell rings twice

PROSERPINE [*gathering up her note-book and papers*] Thats for me [*She hurries out*]

BURGESS [*calling after her*] Oh, we can spare you [*Somewhat relieved by the triumph of having the last word, and yet half inclined to try to improve on it, he looks after her for a moment, then subsides into his seat by Eugene, and addresses him very confidentially*] Now we're alone, Mr Morchbanks, let me give you a friendly int that I wouldnt give to heverybody Ow long ave you known my son-in-law James ere?

MARCHBANKS I dont know I never can remember dates
A few months, perhaps

CANDIDA

BURGESS. Ever notice hennythink queer about him?

MARCHBANKS. I dont think so.

BURGESS [*impressively*] No more you wouldnt. Thats the danger on it Well, he's mad.

MARCHBANKS. Mad!

BURGESS Mad as a Morch 'are. You take notice on him and youll see.

MARCHBANKS [*uneasily*] But surely that is only because his opinions –

BURGESS [*touching him on the knee with his forefinger, and pressing it to hold his attention*] Thats the same what I hused to think, Mr Morchbanks Hi thought long enough that it was ony his opinions; though, mind you, hopinions becomes vurry serious things when people takes to hactin on em as e does. But thats not what I go on [*He looks round to make sure that they are alone, and bends over to Eugene's ear*]. What do you think he sez to me this mornin in this very room?

MARCHBANKS What?

BURGESS He sez to me – this is as sure as we're settin here now – he sez 'I'm a fool,' he sez; 'and yore a scounderl.' Me a sounderl, mind you! And then shook ands with me on it, as if it was to my credit! Do you mean to tell me as that man's sane?

MORELL [*outside, calling to Proserpine as he opens the door*] Get all their names and addresses, Miss Garnett.

PROSERPINE [*in the distance*] Yes, Mr Morell.

Morell comes in, with the deputation's documents in his hands

BURGESS [*aside to Marchbanks*] Yorr he is Just you keep your heye on im and see. [*Rising momentarily*] I'm sorry, James, to ave to make a complaint to you. I dont want to do it, but I feel I oughter, as a matter o right and dooty.

MORELL Whats the matter?

BURGESS Mr Morchbanks will bear me hout· he was a witness. [*Very solemnly*] Yore young woman so far forgot herself as to call ma a silly old fat'ead.

MORELL [*with tremendous heartiness*] Oh, now, isnt that

exactly like Prossy? She's so frank she cant contain herself!
 Poor Prossy! Ha! ha!

BURGESS [*trembling with rage*] And do you hexpec me to put up with it from the like of er?

MORELL Pooh, nonsense! you cant take any notice of it
 Never mind [*He goes to the cellaret and puts the papers into one of the drawers*]

BURGESS Oh, Hi dont mind Hi'm above it But is it right? thats what I want to know Is it right?

MORELL Thats a question for the Church, not for the laity
 Has it done you any harm? thats the question for you, eh?
 Of course it hasnt Think no more of it [*He dismisses the subject by going to his place at the table and setting to work at his correspondence*]

BURGESS [*aside to Marchbanks*] What did I tell you? Mad as a
 atter [*He goes to the table and asks, with the sickly civility of a hungry man*] When's dinner, James?

MORELL Not for a couple of hours yet

BURGESS [*with plaintive resignation*] Gimme a nice book to read
 over the fire, will you, James thur's a good chap

MORELL What sort of book? A good one?

BURGESS [*with almost a yell of remonstrance*] Nah-oo! Summat
 pleasant, just to pass the time [*Morell takes an illustrated paper from the table and offers it He accepts it humbly*] Thank
 yer, James [*He goes back to the big chair at the fire, and sits there at his ease, reading*]

MORELL [*as he writes*] Candida will come to entertain you
 presently She has got rid of her pupil She is filling the
 lamps

MARCHBANKS [*starting up in the wildest consternation*] But that
 will soil her hands I cant bear that, Morell it's a shame
 I'll go and fill them [*He makes for the door*]

MORELL Youd better not [*Marchbanks stops irresolutely*]
 She'd only set you to clean my boots, to save me the trouble
 of doing it myself in the morning

BURGESS [*with grave disapproval*] Dont you keep a servant
 now, James?

CANDIDA

MORELL. Yes· but she isnt a slave; and the house looks as if I kept three That means that everyone has to lend a hand. It's not a bad plan· Prossy and I can talk business after breakfast while we're washing up. Washing up's no trouble when there are two people to do it.

MARCHBANKS [*tormentedly*] Do you think every woman is as coarse-grained as Miss Garnett?

BURGESS [*emphatically*] Thats quite right, Mr Morchbanks: thats quite right She is coarse-grained

MORELL [*quietly and significantly*] Marchbanks!

MARCHBANKS Yes?

MORELL How many servants does your father keep?

MARCHBANKS [*pettishly*] Oh, I dont know [*He moves to the sofa, as if to get as far as possible from Morell's questioning, and sits down in great agony of spirit, thinking of the paraffin*].

MORELL [*very gravely*] So many that you dont know! [*More aggressively*] When theres anything coarse-grained to be done, you just ring the bell and throw it on to somebody else, eh?

MARCHBANKS Oh, dont torture me. You dont even ring the bell But your wife's beautiful fingers are dabbling in paraffin oil while you sit here comfortably preaching about it· everlasting preaching preaching! words! words! words!

BURGESS [*intensely appreciating this retort*] Har, har! Devil a better! [*Radiantly*] Ad you there, James, straight.

Candida comes in, well aproned, with a reading lamp trimmed, filled, and ready for lighting. She places it on the table near Morell, ready for use.

CANDIDA [*brushing her finger tips together with a slight twitch of her nose*] If you stay with us, Eugene, I think I will hand over the lamps to you.

MARCHBANKS I will stay on condition that you hand over all the rough work to me.

CANDIDA. Thats very gallant; but I think I should like to see how you do it first [*Turning to Morell*] James: youve not been looking after the house properly

MORELL. What have I done – or not done – my love?

CANDIDA [*with serious vexation*] My own particular pet scrubbing brush has been used for blackleading [*A heart-breaking wail bursts from Marchbanks Burgess looks round, amazed Candida hurries to the sofa*] Whats the matter? Are you ill, Eugene?

MARCHBANKS No not ill Only horror! horror! horror!
[*He bows his head on his hands*]

BURGESS [*shocked*] What! Got the orrors, Mr Morchbanks! Oh, thats bad, at your age You must leave it off gradually

CANDIDA [*reassured*] Nonsense, papa! It's only poetic horror, isnt it, Eugene [*petting him*]?

BURGESS [*abashed*] Oh, poetic orror, is it? I beg your pardon, I'm shore [*He turns to the fire again, deprecating his hasty conclusion*]

CANDIDA What is it, Eugene? the scrubbing brush? [*He shudders*] Well, there! never mind [*She sits down beside him*] Wouldnt you like to present me with a nice new one, with an ivory back inlaid with mother-of-pearl?

MARCHBANKS [*softly and musically, but sadly and longingly*] No, not a scrubbing brush, but a boat a tiny shallop to sail away in, far from the world, where the marble floors are washed by the rain and dried by the sun, where the south wind dusts the beautiful green and purple carpets Or a chariot! to carry us up into the sky, where the lamps are stars, and dont need to be filled with paraffin oil every day

MORELL [*harshly*] And where there is nothing to do but to be idle, selfish, and useless

CANDIDA [*jarred*] Oh James! how could you spoil it all?

MARCHBANKS [*firing up*] Yes, to be idle, selfish, and useless that is, to be beautiful and free and happy hasnt every man desired that with all his soul for the woman he loves? Thats my ideal whats yours, and that of all the dreadful people who live in these hideous rows of houses? Sermons and scrubbing brushes! With you to preach the sermon and your wife to scrub

CANDIDA

CANDIDA [*quaintly*] He cleans the boots, Eugene. You will have to clean them tomorrow for saying that about him.
MARCHBANKS. Oh, dont talk about boots! Your feet should be beautiful on the mountains.

CANDIDA. My feet would not be beautiful on the Hackney Road without boots.

BURGESS [*scandalized*] Come, Candy! dont be vulgar. Mr Morchbanks aint accustomed to it. Youre givin him the orrois again. I mean the poetic ones.

Morell is silent Apparently he is busy with his letters: really he is puzzling with misgiving over his new and alarming experience that the surer he is of his moral thrusts, the more swiftly and effectively Eugene parries them To find himself beginning to fear a man whom he does not respect afflicts him bitterly.

Miss Garnett comes in with a telegram.

PROSERPINE [*handing the telegram to Morell*] Reply paid. The boy's waiting [*To Candida, coming back to her machine and sitting down*] Maria is ready for you now in the kitchen, Mrs Morell [*Candida rises*]. The onions have come.

MARCHBANKS [*convulsively*] Onions!

CANDIDA. Yes, onions. Not even Spanish ones: nasty little red onions. You shall help me to slice them. Come along.

She catches him by the wrist and runs out, pulling him after her. Burgess rises in consternation, and stands aghast on the hearth-rug, staring after them

BURGESS Candy didnt oughter anidle a hearl's nevvvy like that It's goin too fur with it. Lookee ere, James. do e often git taken queer like that?

MORELL [*shortly, writing a telegram*] I dont know.

BURGESS [*sentimentally*] He talks very pretty. I awlus had a turn for a bit of poetry. Candy takes arter me that-a-way Huseter make me tell er fairy stories when she was only a little kiddy not that igh [*indicating a stature of two feet or thereabouts*].

MORELL [*preoccupied*] Ah, indeed [*He blots the telegram and goes out*].

PROSERPINE Used you to make the fairy stories up out of your own head?

Burgess, not deigning to reply, strikes an attitude of the haughtiest disdain on the hearth-rug

PROSERPINE [*calmly*] I should never have supposed you had it in you. By the way, I'd better warn you, since you've taken such a fancy to Mr Marchbanks. He's mad.

BURGESS Mad! What! Im too!!

PROSERPINE Mad as a March hare. He did frighten me, I can tell you, just before you came in that time. Haven't you noticed the queer things he says?

BURGESS So that's what the poetic orrors means. Blame me if it didn't come into my ed once or twyst that he was a bit horff is chump! [*He crosses the room to the door, lifting up his voice as he goes*] Well, this is a pretty sort of asylum for a man to be in, with no one but you to take care of him!

PROSERPINE [*as he passes her*] Yes, what a dreadful thing it would be if anything happened to you!

BURGESS [*loftily*] Don't you haddress no remarks to me. Tell your hemployer that I've gone into the gorden for a smoke.

PROSERPINE [*mocking*] Oh!

Before Burgess can retort, Morell comes back

BURGESS [*sentimentally*] Goin for a turn in the gording to smoke, James.

MORELL [*brusquely*] Oh, all right, all right. [*Burgess goes out pathetically in the character of a weary old man. Morell stands at the table, turning over his papers, and adding, across to Proserpine, half humorously, half absently*] Well, Miss Prossy, why have you been calling my father-in-law names?

PROSERPINE [*blushing fiery red, and looking quickly up at him, half scared, half reproachful*] I - [*She bursts into tears*]

MORELL [*with tender gaiety, leaning across the table towards her, and consoling her*] Oh, come! come! come! Nevermind, Pross. He is a silly old fathead, isn't he?

With an explosive sob, she makes a dash at the door, and vanishes, banging it. Morell, shaking his head resignedly, sighs,

and goes wearily to his chair, where he sits down and sets to work, looking old and careworn

Candida comes in. She has finished her household work and taken off the apron. She at once notices his dejected appearance, and posts herself quietly at the visitors' chair, looking down at him attentively. She says nothing.

MORELL [*looking up, but with his pen raised ready to resume his work*] Well? Where is Eugene?

CANDIDA. Washing his hands in the scullery under the tap. He will make an excellent cook if he can only get over his dread of Maria.

MORELL [*shortly*] Ha! No doubt. [*He begins writing again*].

CANDIDA [*going nearer, and putting her hand down softly on his to stop him as she says*] Come here, dear. Let me look at you. [*He drops his pen and yields himself to her disposal. She makes him rise, and brings him a little away from the table, looking at him critically all the time*]. Turn your face to the light. [*She places him facing the window*]. My boy is not looking well. Has he been overworking?

MORELL Nothing more than usual.

CANDIDA. He looks very pale, and grey, and wrinkled, and old [*His melancholy deepens and she attacks it with wilful gaiety*] Here: [*pulling him towards the easy chair*] you've done enough writing for today. Leave Prossy to finish it. Come and talk to me

MORELL But —

CANDIDA [*insisting*] Yes, I must be talked to. [*She makes him sit down, and seats herself on the carpet beside his knee*]. Now [*patting his hand*] you're beginning to look better already. Why must you go out every night lecturing and talking? I hardly have one evening a week with you. Of course what you say is all very true; but it does no good. they don't mind what you say to them one little bit. They think they agree with you; but what's the use of their agreeing with you if they go and do just the opposite of what you tell them the moment your back is turned? Look at our congregation at St Dominic's! Why do they come to hear you talking about

Christianity every Sunday? Why, just because theyve been so full of business and money-making for six days that they want to forget all about it and have a rest on the seventh, so that they can go back fresh and make money harder than ever! You positively help them at it instead of hindering them

MORELL [*with energetic seriousness*] You know very well, Candida, that I often blow them up soundly for that And if there is nothing in their churchgoing but rest and diversion, why dont they try something more amusing? more self-indulgent? There must be some good in the fact that they prefer St Dominic's to worse places on Sundays

CANDIDA Oh, the worse places arnt open, and even if they were, they darent be seen going to them Besides, James dear, you preach so splendidly that it's as good as a play for them Why do you think the women are so enthusiastic?

MORELL [*shocked*] Candida!

CANDIDA Oh, I know You silly boy you think it's your Socialism and your religion, but if it were that, theyd do what you tell them instead of only coming to look at you They all have Prossy's complaint

MORELL Prossy's complaint! What do you mean, Candida?

CANDIDA Yes, Prossy, and all the other secretaries you ever had Why does Prossy condescend to wash up the things, and to peel potatoes and abase herself in all manner of ways for six shillings a week less than she used to get in a city office? She's in love with you, James thats the reason Theyre all in love with you And you are in love with preaching because you do it so beautifully And you think it's all enthusiasm for the kingdom of Heaven on earth, and so do they You dear silly!

MORELL Candida what dreadful! what soul-destroying cynicism! Are you jesting? Or - can it be? - are you jealous?

CANDIDA [*with curious thoughtfulness*] Yes, I feel a little jealous sometimes

MORELL [*incredulously*] Of Prossy?

CANDIDA [*laughing*] No, no, no, no Not jealous of anybody

Jealous for somebody else, who is not loved as he ought to be.

MORELL. Me?

CANDIDA You! Why, you're spoiled with love and worship. you get far more than is good for you. No. I mean Eugene.

MORELL [*startled*] Eugene!

CANDIDA. It seems unfair that all the love should go to you, and none to him; although he needs it so much more than you do. [*A convulsive movement shakes him in spite of himself*].

Whats the matter? Am I worrying you?

MORELL [*hastily*] Not at all [*Looking at her with troubled intensity*] You know that I have perfect confidence in you, Candida.

CANDIDA. You vain thing! Are you so sure of your irresistible attractions?

MORELL. Candida: you are shocking me. I never thought of my attractions I thought of your goodness, of your purity. That is what I confide in.

CANDIDA. What a nasty uncomfortable thing to say to me!

Oh, you are a clergyman, James: a thorough clergyman!

MORELL [*turning away from her, heart-stricken*] So Eugene says.

CANDIDA [*with lively interest, leaning over to him with her arms on his knee*] Eugene's always right He's a wonderful boy I have grown fonder and fonder of him all the time I was away Do you know, James, that though he has not the least suspicion of it himself, he is ready to fall madly in love with me?

MORELL [*grimly*] Oh, he has no suspicion of it himself, hasnt he?

CANDIDA Not a bit [*She takes her arms from his knee, and turns thoughtfully, sinking into a more restful attitude with her hands in her lap*] Some day he will know when he is grown up and experienced, like you. And he will know that I must have known. I wonder what he will think of me then

MORELL No evil, Candida I hope and trust, no evil.

CANDIDA [*dubiously*] That will depend.

MORELL [*bewildered*] Depend!

CANDIDA [*looking at him*] Yes it will depend on what happens to him [*He looks vacantly at her*] Dont you see? It will depend on how he comes to learn what love really is I mean on the sort of woman who will teach it to him

MORELL [*quite at a loss*] Yes No I dont know what you mean

CANDIDA [*explaining*] If he learns it from a good woman, then it will be all right he will forgive me

MORELL Forgive?

CANDIDA But suppose he learns it from a bad woman, as so many men do, especially poetic men, who imagine all women are angels! Suppose he only discovers the value of love when he has thrown it away and degraded himself in his ignorance! Will he forgive me then, do you think?

MORELL Forgive you for what?

CANDIDA [*realizing how stupid he is, and a little disappointed, though quite tenderly so*] Dont you understand? [*He shakes his head She turns to him again, so as to explain with the fondest intimacy*] I mean, will he forgive me for not teaching him myself? For abandoning him to the bad women for the sake of my goodness, of my purity, as you call it? Ah, James, how little you understand me, to talk of your confidence in my goodness and purity! I would give them both to poor Eugene as willingly as I would give my shawl to a beggar dying of cold, if there were nothing else to restrain me Put your trust in my love for you, James, for if that went, I should care very little for your sermons mere phrases that you cheat yourself and others with every day [*She is about to rise*]

MORELL His words!

CANDIDA [*checking herself quickly in the act of getting up*] Whose words?

MORELL Eugene's

CANDIDA [*delighted*] He is always right He understands you, he understands me, he understands Prossy, and you, darling, you understand nothing [*She laughs, and kisses him to console him He recoils as if stabbed, and springs up*]

CANDIDA

MORELL. How can you bear to do that when – Oh, Candida
[*with anguish in his voice*] I had rather you had plunged a
grappling iron into my heart than given me that kiss.

CANDIDA [*amazed*] My dear: whats the matter?

MORELL [*frantically waving her off*] Dont touch me.

CANDIDA James!!!

*They are interrupted by the entrance of Marchbanks with
Burgess, who stop near the door, staring.*

MARCHBANKS. Is anything the matter?

MORELL [*deadly white, putting an iron constraint on himself*]
Nothing but this: that either you were right this morning,
or Candida is mad.

BURGESS [*in loudest protest*] What! Candy mad too! Oh, come!
come! come! [*He crosses the room to the fireplace, protesting as he
goes, and knocks the ashes out of his pipe on the bars*].

*Morell sits down at his table desperately, leaning forward to hide
his face, and interlacing his fingers rigidly to keep them steady.*

CANDIDA [*to Morell, relieved and laughing*] Oh, youre only
shocked! Is that all? How conventional all you unconven-
tional people are! [*She sits gaily on the arm of the chair*].

BURGESS. Come be'ave yourself, Candy. Whatll Mr
Morchbanks think of you?

CANDIDA. This comes of James teaching me to think for
myself, and never to hold back out of fear of what other
people may think of me. It works beautifully as long as I
think the same things as he does But now! because I have
just thought something different! look at him! Just look!
[*She points to Morell, greatly amused*].

*Eugene looks, and instantly presses his hand on his heart, as if
some pain had shot through it He sits down on the sofa like a man
witnessing a tragedy.*

BURGESS [*on the hearthrug*] Well, James, you certnly haint as
himpressive lookin as usu'l

MORELL [*with a laugh which is half a sob*] I suppose not I beg
all your pardons: I was not conscious of making a fuss
[*Pulling himself together*] Well, well, well, well, well! [*He sets
to work at his papers again with resolute cheerfulness*].

CANDIDA [*going to the sofa and sitting beside Marchbanks, still in a bantering humor*] Well, Eugene why are you so sad? Did the onions make you cry?

MARCHBANKS [*aside to her*] It is your cruelty I hate cruelty It is a horrible thing to see one person make another suffer

CANDIDA [*petting him ironically*] Poor boy! have I been cruel? Did I make it slice nasty little red onions?

MARCHBANKS [*earnestly*] Oh, stop, stop I dont mean myself You have made him suffer frightfully I feel his pain in my own heart I know that it is not your fault it is something that must happen, but dont make light of it I shudder when you torture him and laugh

CANDIDA [*incredulously*] I torture James! Nonsense, Eugene how you exaggerate! Silly! [*She rises and goes to the table, a little troubled*] Dont work any more, dear Come and talk to us

MORELL [*affectionately but bitterly*] Ah no I cant talk I can only preach

CANDIDA [*caressing his hand*] Well, come and preach

BURGESS [*strongly remonstrating*] Aw no, Candy Ang it all!

Lexy Mill comes in, anxious and important

LEXY [*hastening to shake hands with Candida*] How do you do, Mrs Morell? So glad to see you back again

CANDIDA Thank you, Lexy You know Eugene, dont you?

LEXY Oh yes How do you do, Marchbanks?

MARCHBANKS Quite well, thanks

LEXY [*to Morell*] Ive just come from the Guild of St Matthew They are in the greatest consternation about your telegram

CANDIDA What did you telegraph about, James?

LEXY [*to Candida*] He was to have spoken for them tonight Theyve taken the large hall in Mare Street and spent a lot of money on posters Morell's telegram was to say he couldnt come It came on them like a thunderbolt

CANDIDA [*surprised, and beginning to suspect something wrong*]

Given up an engagement to speak!

BURGESS Fust time in his life, I'll bet Aint it, Candy?

LEXY [*to Morell*] They decided to send an urgent telegram to you asking whether you could not change your mind. Have you received it?

MORELL [*with restrained impatience*] Yes, yes: I got it.

LEXY. It was reply paid.

MORELL. Yes, I know. I answered it. I cant go.

CANDIDA. But why, James?

MORELL [*almost fiercely*] Because I dont choose. These people forget that I am a man: they think I am a talking machine to be turned on for their pleasure every evening of my life. May I not have one night at home, with my wife, and my friends?

They are all amazed at this outburst, except Eugene. His expression remains unchanged.

CANDIDA. Oh, James, you mustnt mind what I said about that. And if you dont go youll have an attack of bad conscience tomorrow.

LEXY [*intimidated, but urgent*] I know, of course, that they make the most unreasonable demands on you. But they have been telegraphing all over the place for another speaker; and they can get nobody but the President of the Agnostic League.

MORELL [*promptly*] Well, an excellent man. What better do they want?

LEXY. But he always insists so powerfully on the divorce of Socialism from Christianity. He will undo all the good we have been doing. Of course you know best; but – [*he shrugs his shoulders and wanders to the hearth beside Burgess*].

CANDIDA [*coaxingly*] Oh, do go, James. We'll all go.

BURGESS [*grumblingly*] Look ere, Candy! I say! Lets stay at home by the fire, comfortable. He wont need to be more'n a couple-o-hour away.

CANDIDA. Youll be just as comfortable at the meeting. We'll all sit on the platform and be great people.

EUGENE [*terrified*] Oh please dont let us go on the platform. No everyone will stare at us: I couldnt. I'll sit at the back of the room.

CANDIDA Dont be afraid Theyll be too busy looking at James to notice you

MORELL Prossy's complaint, Candida! Eh?

CANDIDA [*gaily*] Yes Prossy's complaint

BURGESS [*mystified*] Prossy's complaint! What are you talkin about, James?

MORELL [*not heeding him, rises, goes to the door, and holds it open, calling in a commanding tone*] Miss Garnett

PROSERPINE [*in the distance*] Yes, Mr Morell Coming

They all wait, except Burgess, who turns stealthily to Lexy

BURGESS Listen ere, Mr Mill Whats Prossy's complaint? Whats wrong with er?

LEXY [*confidentially*] Well, I dont exactly know, but she spoke very strangely to me this morning I'm afraid she's a little out of her mind sometimes

BURGESS [*overwhelmed*] Why, it must be catchin! Four in the same ouse!

PROSERPINE [*appearing on the threshold*] What is it, Mr Morell?

MORELL Telegraph to the Guild of St Matthew that I am coming

PROSERPINE [*surprised*] Dont they expect you?

MORELL [*peremptorily*] Do as I tell you

Proserpine, frightened, sits down at her typewriter, and obeys Morell, now unaccountably resolute and forceful, goes across to Burgess Candida watches his movements with growing wonder and misgiving

MORELL Burgess you dont want to come

BURGESS Oh, dont put it like that, James It's ony that it aint Sunday, you know

MORELL I'm sorry I thought you might like to be introduced to the chairman He's on the Works Committee of the County Council, and has some influence in the matter of contracts [*Burgess wakes up at once*] Youll come?

BURGESS [*with enthusiasm*] Cawrse I'll come, James Aint it awlus a pleasure to ear you!

MORELL [*turning to Prossy*] I shall want you to take some

CANDIDA

notes at the meeting, Miss Garnett, if you have no other engagement [*She nods, afraid to speak*]. You are coming, Lexy, I suppose?

LEXY. Certainly.

CANDIDA. We're all coming, James.

MORELL. No you are not coming; and Eugene is not coming. You will stay here and entertain him – to celebrate your return home. [*Eugene rises, breathless*].

CANDIDA But, James –

MORELL [*authoritatively*] I insist. You do not want to come; and he does not want to come. [*Candida is about to protest*]. Oh, don't concern yourselves: I shall have plenty of people without you your chairs will be wanted by unconverted people who have never heard me before

CANDIDA [*troubled*] Eugene. wouldnt you like to come?

MORELL. I should be afraid to let myself go before Eugene. he is so critical of sermons. [*Looking at him*] He knows I am afraid of him: he told me as much this morning Well, I shall shew him how much afraid I am by leaving him here in your custody, Candida

MARCHBANKS [*to himself, with vivid feeling*] Thats brave. Thats beautiful.

CANDIDA [*with anxious misgiving*] But – but – Is anything the matter, James? [*Greatly troubled*] I cant understand –

MORELL [*taking her tenderly in his arms and kissing her on the forehead*] Ah, I thought it was I who couldnt understand, dear.

ACT III

Past ten in the evening The curtains are drawn, and the lamps lighted The typewriter is in its case the large table has been cleared and tidied everything indicates that the day's work is over

Candida and Marchbanks are sitting by the fire The reading lamp is on the mantelshelf above Marchbanks, who is in the small chair, reading aloud A little pile of manuscripts and a couple of volumes of poetry are on the carpet beside him Candida is in the easy chair The poker, a light brass one, is upright in her hand Leaning back and looking intently at the point of it, with her feet stretched towards the blaze, she is in a waking dream, miles away from her surroundings and completely oblivious of Eugene

MARCHBANKS [*breaking off in his recitation*] Every poet that ever lived has put that thought into a sonnet He must he cant help it [*He looks to her for assent, and notices her absorption in the poker*] Havnt you been listening? [*No response*] Mrs Morell!

CANDIDA [*starting*] Eh?

MARCHBANKS Havnt you been listening?

CANDIDA [*with a guilty excess of politeness*] Oh yes It's very nice Go on, Eugene I'm longing to hear what happens to the angel

MARCHBANKS [*letting the manuscript drop from his hand to the floor*] I beg your pardon for boring you

CANDIDA But you are not boring me, I assure you Please go on Do, Eugene

MARCHBANKS I finished the poem about the angel quarter of an hour ago Ive read you several things since

CANDIDA [*remorsefully*] I'm so sorry, Eugene I think the poker must have hypnotized me [*She puts it down*]

MARCHBANKS It made me horribly uneasy

CANDIDA Why didnt you tell me? I'd have put it down at once

MARCHBANKS I was afraid of making you uneasy too It looked as if it were a weapon If I were a hero of old I should

have laid my drawn sword between us. If Morell had come in he would have thought you had taken up the poker because there was no sword between us.

CANDIDA [*wondering*] What? [*With a puzzled glance at him*] I cant quite follow that. Those sonnets of yours have perfectly addled me. Why should there be a sword between us?

MARCHBANKS [*evasively*] Oh, never mind. [*He stoops to pick up the manuscript*].

CANDIDA. Put that down again, Eugene. There are limits to my appetite for poetry. even your poetry. Youve been reading to me for more than two hours, ever since James went out I want to talk.

MARCHBANKS [*rising, scared*] No: I mustnt talk. [*He looks round him in his lost way, and adds, suddenly*] I think I'll go out and take a walk in the park. [*He makes for the door*].

CANDIDA. Nonsense: it's closed long ago. Come and sit down on the hearth-rug, and talk moonshine as you usually do I want to be amused. Dont you want to?

MARCHBANKS [*half in terror, half enraptured*] Yes.

CANDIDA Then come along. [*She moves her chair back a little to make room*].

He hesitates, then timidly stretches himself on the hearth-rug, face upwards, and throws back his head across her knees, looking up at her

MARCHBANKS Oh, Ive been so miserable all the evening, because I was doing right Now I'm doing wrong; and I'm happy.

CANDIDA [*tenderly amused at him*] Yes I'm sure you feel a great grown-up wicked deceiver Quite proud of yourself, arnt you?

MARCHBANKS [*raising his hand quickly and turning a little to look round at her*] Take care I'm ever so much older than you, if you only knew. [*He turns quite over on his knees, with his hands clasped and his arms on her lap, and speaks with growing impulse, his blood beginning to stir*] May I say some wicked things to you?

CANDIDA [*without the least fear or coldness, and with perfect respect for his passion, but with a touch of her wise-hearted maternal humor*]

No But you may say anything you really and truly feel Anything at all, no matter what it is I am not afraid, so long as it is your real self that speaks, and not a mere attitude a gallant attitude, or a wicked attitude, or even a poetic attitude I put you on your honor and truth Now say whatever you want to

MARCHBANKS [*the eager expression vanishing utterly from his lips and nostrils as his eyes light up with pathetic spirituality*] Oh, now I cant say anything all the words I know belong to some attitude or other – all except one

CANDIDA What one is that?

MARCHBANKS [*softly, losing himself in the music of the name*] Candida, Candida, Candida, Candida, Candida I must say that now, because you have put me on my honor and truth, and I never think or feel Mrs Morell it is always Candida

CANDIDA Of course And what have you to say to Candida?

MARCHBANKS Nothing but to repeat your name a thousand times Dont you feel that every time is a prayer to you?

CANDIDA Doesnt it make you happy to be able to pray?

MARCHBANKS Yes, very happy

CANDIDA Well, that happiness is the answer to your prayer Do you want anything more?

MARCHBANKS No I have come into Heaven, where want is unknown

Morell comes in He halts on the threshold, and takes in the scene at a glance

MORELL [*grave and self-contained*] I hope I dont disturb you Candida starts up violently, but without the smallest embarrassment, laughing at herself Eugene, capsized by her sudden movement, recovers himself without rising, and sits on the rug hugging his ankles, also quite unembarrassed

CANDIDA Oh, James, how you startled me! I was so taken up with Eugene that I didnt hear your latchkey How did the meeting go off? Did you speak well?

MORELL I have never spoken better in my life.

CANDIDA That was first rate! How much was the collection?

MORELL I forgot to ask

CANDIDA [*to Eugene*] He must have spoken splendidly, or he would never have forgotten that [*To Morell*] Where are all the others?

MORELL They left long before I could get away. I thought I should never escape. I believe they are having supper somewhere.

CANDIDA [*in her domestic business tone*] Oh, in that case, Maria may go to bed. I'll tell her. [*She goes out to the kitchen*].

MORELL [*looking sternly down at Marchbanks*] Well?

MARCHBANKS [*squatting grotesquely on the hearth-rug, and actually at ease with Morell. even impishly humorous*] Well?

MORELL. Have you anything to tell me?

MARCHBANKS. Only that I have been making a fool of myself here in private whilst you have been making a fool of yourself in public.

MORELL Hardly in the same way, I think

MARCHBANKS [*eagerly, scrambling up*] The very, very, very same way. I have been playing the Good Man. Just like you. When you began your heroics about leaving me here with Candida –

MORELL [*involuntarily*] Candida!

MARCHBANKS. Oh yes. I've got that far. But don't be afraid. Heroics are infectious. I caught the disease from you. I swore not to say a word in your absence that I would not have said a month ago in your presence.

MORELL Did you keep your oath?

MARCHBANKS [*suddenly perching himself on the back of the easy chair*] It kept itself somehow until about ten minutes ago. Up to that moment I went on desperately reading to her – reading my own poems – anybody's poems – to stave off a conversation. I was standing outside the gate of Heaven, and refusing to go in. Oh, you can't think how heroic it was, and how uncomfortable! Then –

MORELL [*steadily controlling his suspense*] Then?

CANDIDA

MARCHBANKS [*prosaically slipping down into a quite ordinary attitude on the seat of the chair*] Then she couldnt bear being read to any longer

MORELL And you approached the gate of Heaven at last?

MARCHBANKS Yes

MORELL Well? [*Fiercely*] Speak, man have you no feeling for me?

MARCHBANKS [*softly and musically*] Then she became an angel, and there was a flaming sword that turned every way, so that I couldnt go in, for I saw that that gate was really the gate of Hell

MORELL [*triumphantly*] She repulsed you!

MARCHBANKS [*rising in wild scorn*] No, you fool if she had done that I should never have seen that I was in Heaven already Repulsed me! You think that would have saved us! virtuous indignation! Oh, you are not worthy to live in the same world with her [*He turns away contemptuously to the other side of the room*]

MORELL [*who has watched him quietly without changing his place*] Do you think you make yourself more worthy by reviling me, Eugene?

MARCHBANKS Here endeth the thousand and first lesson Morell I dont think much of your preaching after all I believe I could do it better myself The man I want to meet is the man that Candida married

MORELL The man that —? Do you mean me?

MARCHBANKS I dont mean the Reverend James Mavor Morell, moralist and windbag I mean the real man that the Reverend James must have hidden somewhere inside his black coat the man that Candida loved You cant make a woman like Candida love you by merely buttoning your collar at the back instead of in front

MORELL [*boldly and steadily*] When Candida promised to marry me, I was the same moralist and windbag you now see I wore my black coat, and my collar was buttoned behind instead of in front Do you think she would

loved me any the better for being insincere in my profession?

MARCHBANKS [*on the sofa, hugging his ankles*] Oh, she forgave you, just as she forgives me for being a coward, and a weakling, and what you call a snivelling little whelp and all the rest of it [*Dreamily*] A woman like that has divine insight: she loves our souls, and not our follies and vanities and illusions, nor our collars and coats, nor any other of the rags and tatters we are rolled up in. [*He reflects on this for an instant. then turns intently to question Morell*]. What I want to know is how you got past the flaming sword that stopped me.

MORELL. Perhaps because I was not interrupted at the end of ten minutes

MARCHBANKS [*taken aback*] What!

MORELL. Man can climb to the highest summits; but he cannot dwell there long.

MARCHBANKS [*springing up*] It's false. there can he dwell for ever, and there only It's in the other moments that he can find no rest, no sense of the silent glory of life. Where would you have me spend my moments, if not on the summits?

MORELL. In the scullery, slicing onions and filling lamps.

MARCHBANKS. Or in the pulpit, scrubbing cheap earthenware souls?

MORELL. Yes, that too. It was there that I earned my golden moment, and the right, in that moment, to ask her to love me *I did not take the moment on credit, nor did I use it to steal another man's happiness.*

MARCHBANKS [*rather disgustedly, trotting back towards the fireplace*] I have no doubt you conducted the transaction as honestly as if you were buying a pound of cheese. [*He stops on the brink of the hearth-rug, and adds, thoughtfully, to himself, with his back turned to Morell*] *I could only go to her as a beggar.*

MORELL [*staring*] A beggar dying of cold! asking for her shawl!

MARCHBANKS [*turning, surprised*] Thank you for touching up my poetry Yes, if you like a beggar dying of cold, asking for her shawl

MORELL [*excitedly*] And she refused Shall I tell you why she refused? I can tell you, on her own authority It was because of -

MARCHBANKS She didnt refuse

MORELL Not!

MARCHBANKS She offered me all I chose to ask for her shawl, her wings, the wreath of stars on her head, the lilies in her hand, the crescent moon beneath her feet -

MORELL [*seizing him*] Out with the truth, man my wife is my wife I want no more of your poetic fripperies I know well that if I have lost her love and you have gained it, no law will bind her

MARCHBANKS [*quaintly, without fear or resistance*] Catch me by the shirt collar, Morell she will arrange it for me afterwards as she did this morning [*With quiet rapture*] I shall feel her hands touch me

MORELL You young imp, do you know how dangerous it is to say that to me? Or [*with a sudden misgiving*] has something made you brave?

MARCHBANKS I'm not afraid now I disliked you before that was why I shrank from your touch But I saw today - when she tortured you - that you love her Since then I have been your friend you may strangle me if you like

MORELL [*releasing him*] Eugene if that is not a heartless lie - if you have a spark of human feeling left in you - will you tell me what has happened during my absence?

MARCHBANKS What happened! Why, the flaming sword [*Morell stamps with impatience*] - Well, in plain prose, I loved her so exquisitely that I wanted nothing more than the happiness of being in such love And before I had time to come down from the highest summits, you came in

MORELL [*suffering deeply*] So it is still unsettled Still the misery of doubt

MARCHBANKS Misery! I am the happiest of men I desire

nothing now but her happiness. [*In a passion of sentiment*] Oh, Morell, let us both give her up. Why should she have to choose between a wretched little nervous disease like me, and a pig-headed parson like you? Let us go on a pilgrimage, you to the east and I to the west, in search of a worthy lover for her – some beautiful archangel with purple wings –

MORELL. Some fiddlestick! Oh, if she is mad enough to leave me for you, who will protect her? who will help her? who will work for her? who will be a father to her children? [*He sits down distractedly on the sofa, with his elbows on his knees and his head propped on his clenched fists*].

MARCHBANKS [*snapping his fingers wildly*] She does not ask those silly questions. It is she who wants somebody to protect, to help, to work for: somebody to give her children to protect, to help and to work for. Some grown up man who has become as a little child again. Oh, you fool, you fool, you triple fool! I am the man, Morell: I am the man. [*He dances about excitedly, crying*] You don't understand what a woman is. Send for her, Morell: send for her and let her choose between – [*The door opens and Candida enters. He stops as if petrified*]

CANDIDA [*amazed, on the threshold*] What on earth are you at, Eugene?

MARCHBANKS [*oddly*] James and I are having a preaching match; and he is getting the worst of it.

Candida looks quickly round at Morell. Seeing that he is distressed, she hurries down to him, greatly vexed.

CANDIDA. You have been annoying him. Now I won't have it, Eugene, do you hear? [*She puts her hand on Morell's shoulder, and quite forgets her wifely tact in her anger*]. My boy shall not be worried. I will protect him.

MORELL [*rising proudly*] Protect!

CANDIDA [*not heeding him – to Eugene*] What have you been saying?

MARCHBANKS [*appalled*] Nothing. I –

CANDIDA Eugene! Nothing?

MARCHBANKS [*piteously*] I mean – I – I'm very sorry. I won't

do it again indeed I wont I'll let him alone

MOPELL [*indignantly, with an aggressive movement towards Eugene*] Let me alone! You young –

CANDIDA [*stopping him*] Sh! – no let me deal with him, James

MARCHBANKS Oh, youre not angry with me, are you?

CANDIDA [*severely*] Yes I am very angry I have a good mind to pack you out of the house

MORELL [*taken aback by Candida's vigor, and by no means relishing the position of being rescued by her from another man*] Gently,

Candida, gently I am able to take care of myself

CANDIDA [*petting him*] Yes, dear of course you are But you musnt be annoyed and made miserable

MARCHBANKS [*almost in tears, turning to the door*] I'll go

CANDIDA Oh, you neednt go I cant turn you out at this time of night [*Vehemently*] Shame on you! For shame!

MARCHBANKS [*desperately*] But what have I done?

CANDIDA I know what you have done as well as if I had been here all the time Oh, it was unworthy! You are like a child you cannot hold your tongue

MARCHBANKS I would die ten times over sooner than give you a moment's pain

CANDIDA [*with infinite contempt for this puerility*] Much good your dying would do me!

MORELL Candida, my dear this altercation is hardly quite seemly It is a matter between two men, and I am the right person to settle it

CANDIDA Two men! Do you call that a man! [*To Eugene*] You bad boy!

MARCHBANKS [*gathering a whimsically affectionate courage from the scolding*] If I am to be scolded like a boy, I must make a boy's excuse He began it And he's bigger than I am

CANDIDA [*losing confidence a little as her concern for Morell's dignity takes the alarm*] That cant be true [*To Morell*] You didnt begin it, James, did you?

MORELL [*contemptuously*] No

MARCHBANKS [*indignant*] Oh!

MORELL [*to Eugene*] You began it this morning [*Candida,*

instantly connecting this with his mysterious allusion in the afternoon to something told him by Eugene in the morning, looks at him with quick suspicion Morell proceeds, *with the emphasis of offended superiority*] But your other point is true. I am certainly the bigger of the two, and, I hope, the stronger, Candida. So you had better leave the matter in my hands.

CANDIDA [*again soothing him*] Yes, dear, but – [*troubled*] I don't understand about this morning.

MORELL [*gently snubbing her*] You need not understand, my dear

CANDIDA. But James, I [*the street bell rings*] – Oh bother! Here they all come [*She goes out to let them in*].

MARCHBANKS [*running to Morell*] Oh, Morell, isn't it dreadful? She's angry with us. she hates me. What shall I do?

MORELL [*with quaint desperation, walking up and down the middle of the room*] Eugene. my head is spinning round. I shall begin to laugh presently.

MARCHBANKS [*following him anxiously*] No, no she'll think I've thrown you into hysterics. Don't laugh.

Boisterous voices and laughter are heard approaching Lexy Mill, *his eyes sparkling, and his bearing denoting unwonted elevation of spirit, enters with Burgess, who is greasy and self-complacent, but has all his wits about him. Miss Garnett, with her smartest hat and jacket on, follows them, but though her eyes are brighter than before, she is evidently a prey to misgiving. She places herself with her back to her typewriting table, with one hand on it to steady herself, passing the other across her forehead as if she were a little tired and giddy. Marchbanks relapses into shyness and edges away into the corner near the window, where Morell's books are.*

LEXY [*exhilarated*] Morell: I must congratulate you. [*Grasping his hand*] What a noble, splendid, inspired address you gave us! You surpassed yourself.

BURGESS. So you did, James. It fair kep me awake to the lars' word. Didn't it, Miss Gornett?

PROSERPINE [*worriedly*] Oh, I wasn't minding you I was trying to make notes. [*She takes out her note-book, and looks at her stenography, which nearly makes her cry*].

MORELL Did I go too fast, Pross?

PROSERPINE Much too fast You know I cant do more than ninety words a minute [*She relieves her feelings by throwing her note-book angrily beside her machine, ready for use next morning*]

MORELL [*soothingly*] Oh well, well, never mind, never mind, never mind Have you all had supper?

LEXY Mr Burgess has been kind enough to give us a really splendid supper at the Belgrave

BURGESS [*with effusive magnanimity*] Dont mention it, Mr Mill [*Modestly*] Youre arty welcome to my little treat

PROSERPINE We had champagne I never tasted it before I feel quite giddy

MORELL [*surprised*] A champagne supper! That was very handsome Was it my eloquence that produced all this extravagance?

LEXY [*rhetorically*] Your eloquence, and Mr Burgess's goodness of heart [*With a fresh burst of exhilaration*] And what a very fine fellow the chairman is, Morell! He came to supper with us

MORELL [*with long drawn significance, looking at Burgess*] O-o-o-h! the chairman Now I understand

Burgess covers with a deprecatory cough a lively satisfaction with his own diplomatic cunning Lexy folds his arms and leans against the head of the sofa in a high-spirited attitude after nearly losing his balance Candida comes in with glasses, lemons, and a jug of hot water on a tray

CANDIDA Who will have some lemonade? You know our rules total abstinence [*She puts the tray on the table, and takes up the lemon squeezer, looking enquiringly round at them*]

MORELL No use, dear Theyve all had champagne Pross has broken her pledge

CANDIDA [*to Proserpine*] You dont mean to say youve been drinking champagne!

PROSERPINE [*stubbornly*] Yes I do I'm only a beer teetotaller, not a champagne teetotaller I dont like beer Are there any letters for me to answer, Mr Morell?

MORELL No more tonight

PROSERPINE. Very well Goodnight, everybody.

LEXY [*gallantly*] Had I not better see you home, Miss Garnett?

PROSERPINE. No thank you. I shant trust myself with anybody tonight I wish I hadnt taken any of that stuff. [*She takes uncertain aim at the door; dashes at it; and barely escapes without disaster*].

BURGESS [*indignantly*] Stuff indeed! That gurl dunno what champagne is! Pommery and Greeno at twelve and six a bottle She took two glasses amost straight horfff.

MORELL [*anxious about her*] Go and look after her, Lexy.

LEXY [*alarmed*] But if she should really be – Suppose she began to sing in the street, or anything of that sort.

MORELL. Just so she may. Thats why youd better see her safely home.

CANDIDA. Do, Lexy: theres a good fellow. [*She shakes his hand and pushes him gently to the door*].

LEXY. It's evidently my duty to go. I hope it may not be necessary. Goodnight, Mrs Morell. [*To the rest*] Goodnight. [*He goes. Candida shuts the door*].

BURGESS He was gushin with hextra piety hisself arter two sips People carnt drink like they huseter. [*Bustling across to the hearth*] Well, James: it's time to lock up. Mr Morchbanks shall I ave the pleasure of your company for a bit o the way ome?

MARCHBANKS [*affrightedly*] Yes: I'd better go [*He hurries towards the door, but Candida places herself before it, barring his way*].

CANDIDA [*with quiet authority*] You sit down. Youre not going yet.

MARCHBANKS [*quarling*] No I – I didnt mean to [*He sits down abjectly on the sofa*].

CANDIDA. Mr Marchbanks will stay the night with us, papa.

BURGESS Oh well, I'll say goodnight So long, James [*He shakes hands with Morell, and goes over to Eugene*] Make em give you a nightlight by your bed, Mr Morchbanks. itll

comfort you if you wake up in the night with a touch of that complaint of yores Goodnight

MARCHBANKS Thank you I will Goodnight, Mr Burgess
[*They shake hands Burgess goes to the door*]

CANDIDA [*intercepting Morell, who is following Burgess*] Stay here, dear I'll put on papa's coat for him [*She goes out with Burgess*]

MARCHBANKS [*rising and stealing over to Morell*] Morell theres going to be a terrible scene Arnt you afraid?

MORELL Not in the least

MARCHBANKS I never envied you your courage before [*He puts his hand appealingly on Morell's forearm*] Stand by me, wont you?

MORELL [*casting him off resolutely*] Each for himself, Eugene She must choose between us now

Candida returns Eugene creeps back to the sofa like a guilty schoolboy

CANDIDA [*between them, addressing Eugene*] Are you sorry?

MARCHBANKS [*earnestly*] Yes Heartbroken

CANDIDA Well, then, you are forgiven Now go off to bed like a good little boy I want to talk to James about you

MARCHBANKS [*rising in great consternation*] Oh, I cant do that, Morell I must be here I'll not go away Tell her

CANDIDA [*her suspicions confirmed*] Tell me what? [*His eyes avoid hers furtively She turns and mutely transfers the question to Morell*]

MORELL [*bracing himself for the catastrophe*] I have nothing to tell her, except [*here his voice deepens to a measured and mournful tenderness*] that she is my greatest treasure on earth - if she is really mine

CANDIDA [*coldly, offended by his yielding to his orator's instinct and treating her as if she were the audience at the Guild of St Matthew*]

I am sure Eugene can say no less, if that is all

MARCHBANKS [*discouraged*] Morell she's laughing at us

MORELL [*with a quick touch of temper*] There is nothing to laugh at Are you laughing at us, Candida?

CANDIDA [*with quiet anger*] Eugene is very quick-witted, James. I hope I am going to laugh, but I am not sure that I am not going to be very angry. [*She goes to the fireplace, and stands there leaning with her arm on the mantelpiece, and her foot on the fender, whilst Eugene steals to Morell and plucks him by the sleeve*].

MARCHBANKS [*whispering*] Stop, Morell Dont let us say anything

MORELL [*pushing Eugene away without deigning to look at him*] I hope you dont mean that as a threat, Candida.

CANDIDA [*with emphatic warning*] Take care, James. Eugene: I asked you to go. Are you going?

MORELL [*putting his foot down*] He shall not go I wish him to remain.

MARCHBANKS. I'll go. I'll do whatever you want. [*He turns to the door*].

CANDIDA. Stop! [*He obeys*]. Didnt you hear James say he wished you to stay? James is master here. Dont you know that?

MARCHBANKS [*flushing with a young poet's rage against tyranny*] By what right is he master?

CANDIDA [*quietly*] Tell him, James.

MORELL [*taken aback*] My dear. I dont know of any right that makes me master I assert no such right

CANDIDA [*with infinite reproach*] You dont know! Oh, James! James! [*To Eugene, musingly*] I wonder do you understand, Eugene! [*He shakes his head helplessly, not daring to look at her*]. No youre too young Well, I give you leave to stay to stay and learn [*She comes away from the hearth and places herself between them*] Now, James! whats the matter? Come tell me

MARCHBANKS [*whispering tremulously across to him*] Dont

CANDIDA Come Out with it!

MORELL [*slowly*] I meant to prepare your mind carefully, Candida, so as to prevent misunderstanding.

CANDIDA Yes, dear I am sure you did. But never mind I shant misunderstand.

CANDIDA

MORELL Well - er - [*he hesitates, unable to find the long explanation which he supposed to be available*]

CANDIDA Well?

MORELL [*blurtng it out baldly*] Eugene declares that you are in love with him

MARCHBANKS [*frantically*] No, no, no, no, never I did not, Mrs Morell it's not true I said I loved you I said I understood you, and that he couldnt And it was not after what passed there before the fire that I spoke it was not, on my word It was this morning

CANDIDA [*enlightened*] This morning!

MARCHBANKS Yes [*He looks at her, pleading for credence, and then adds simply*] That was what was the matter with my collar

CANDIDA Your collar? [*Suddenly taking in his meaning she turns to Morell, shocked*] Oh, James did you - [*she stops*]?

MORELL [*ashamed*] You know, Candida, that I have a temper to struggle with And he said [*shuddering*] that you despised me in your heart

CANDIDA [*turning quickly on Eugene*] Did you say that?

MARCHBANKS [*terrified*] No

CANDIDA [*almost fiercely*] Then James has just told me a falsehood Is that what you mean?

MARCHBANKS No, no I - I - [*desperately*] it was David's wife And it wasnt at home it was when she saw him dancing before all the people

MORELL [*taking the cue with a debater's adroitness*] Dancing before all the people, Candida, and thinking he was moving their hearts by his mission when they were only suffering from - Prossy's complaint [*She is about to protest he raises his hand to silence her*] Dont try to look indignant, Candida -

CANDIDA Try!

MORELL [*continuing*] Eugene was right As you told me a few hours after, he is always right He said nothing that you did not say far better yourself He is the poet, who sees everything, and I am the poor parson, who understands nothing

CANDIDA [*remorsefully*] Do you mind what is said by a foolish boy, because I said something like it in jest?

MORELL. That foolish boy can speak with the inspiration of a child and the cunning of a serpent. He has claimed that you belong to him and not to me, and, rightly or wrongly, I have come to fear that it may be true. I will not go about tortured with doubts and suspicions. I will not live with you and keep a secret from you. I will not suffer the intolerable degradation of jealousy. We have agreed – he and I – that you shall choose between us now. I await your decision.

CANDIDA [*slowly recoiling a step, her heart hardened by his rhetoric in spite of the sincere feeling behind it*] Oh! I am to choose am I? I suppose it is quite settled that I must belong to one or the other.

MORELL [*firmly*] Quite. You must choose definitely.

MARCHBANKS [*anxiously*] Morell, you don't understand. She means that she belongs to herself.

CANDIDA [*turning to him*] I mean that, and a good deal more, Master Eugene, as you will both find out presently. And pray, my lords and masters, what have you to offer for my choice? I am up for auction, it seems. What do you bid, James?

MORELL [*reproachfully*] Cand – [*He breaks down: his eyes and throat fill with tears: the orator becomes a wounded animal*]. I can't speak –

CANDIDA [*impulsively going to him*] Ah, dearest –

MARCHBANKS [*in wild alarm*] Stop! it's not fair. You mustn't shew her that you suffer, Morell. I am on the rack too; but I am not crying.

MORELL [*rallying all his forces*] Yes, you are right. It is not for pity that I am bidding. [*He disengages himself from Candida*]

CANDIDA [*retreating, chilled*] I beg your pardon, James: I did not mean to touch you. I am waiting to hear your bid.

MORELL [*with great humility*] I have nothing to offer you but my strength for your defence, my honesty for your surety,

my ability and industry for your livelihood, and my authority and position for your dignity That is all it becomes a man to offer to a woman

CANDIDA [*quite quietly*] And you, Eugene? What do you offer?

MARCHBANKS My weakness My desolation My heart's need

CANDIDA [*impressed*] That's a good bid, Eugene Now I know how to make my choice

She pauses and looks curiously from one to the other, as if weighing them Morell, whose lofty confidence has changed into heart-breaking dread at Eugene's bid, loses all power of concealing his anxiety Eugene, strung to the highest tension, does not move a muscle

MORELL [*in a suffocated voice the appeal bursting from the depths of his anguish*] Candida!

MARCHBANKS [*aside, in a flash of contempt*] Coward!

CANDIDA [*significantly*] I give myself to the weaker of the two
Eugene divines her meaning at once his face whitens like steel in a furnace

MORELL [*bowing his head with the calm of collapse*] I accept your sentence, Candida

CANDIDA Do you understand, Eugene?

MARCHBANKS Oh, I feel I'm lost He cannot bear the burden

MORELL [*incredulously, raising his head and voice with comic abruptness*] Do you mean me, Candida?

CANDIDA [*smiling a little*] Let us sit and talk comfortably over it like three friends [*To Morell*] Sit down, dear [*Morell, quite lost, takes the chair from the fireside the children's chair*] Bring me that chair, Eugene [*She indicates the easy chair He fetches it silently, even with something like cold strength, and places it next Morell, a little behind him She sits down He takes the visitor's chair himself, and sits, inscrutable When they are all settled she begins, throwing a spell of quietness on them by her calm, sane, tender tone*] You remember what you told me about yourself, Eugene how nobody has cared for you since your old

nurse died how those clever fashionable sisters and successful brothers of yours were your mother's and father's pets: how miserable you were at Eton how your father is trying to starve you into returning to Oxford how you have had to live without comfort or welcome or refuge always lonely, and nearly always disliked and misunderstood, poor boy!

MARCHBANKS [*faithful to the nobility of his lot*] I had my books
I had Nature And at last I met you

CANDIDA Never mind that just at present Now I want you to look at this other boy here my boy! spoiled from his cradle We go once a fortnight to see his parents You should come with us, Eugene, to see the pictures of the hero of that household. James as a baby! the most wonderful of all babies James holding his first school prize, won at the ripe age of eight! James as the captain of his eleven! James in his first frock coat! James under all sorts of glorious circumstances! You know how strong he is (I hope he didn't hurt you): how clever he is how happy. [*With deepening gravity*] Ask James's mother and his three sisters what it cost to save James the trouble of doing anything but be strong and clever and happy Ask me what it costs to be James's mother and three sisters and wife and mother to his children all in one. Ask Prossy and Maria how troublesome the house is even when we have no visitors to help us to slice the onions Ask the tradesmen who want to worry James and spoil his beautiful sermons who it is that puts them off. When there is money to give, he gives it when there is money to refuse, I refuse it I build a castle of comfort and indulgence and love for him, and stand sentinel always to keep little vulgar cares out I make him master here, though he does not know it, and could not tell you a moment ago how it came to be so. [*With sweet irony*] And when he thought I might go away with you, his only anxiety was — what should become of me! And to tempt me to stay he offered me [*leaning forward to stroke his hair caressingly at each phrase*] his strength for my defence! his industry for my livelihood! his dignity for my position! his — [*relent-*

ing] ah, I am mixing up your beautiful cadences and spoiling them, am I not, darling? [*She lays her cheek fondly against his*]

MORELL [*quite overcome, kneeling beside her chair and embracing her with boyish ingenuousness*] It's all true, every word What I am you have made me with the labor of your hands and the love of your heart You are my wife, my mother, my sisters you are the sum of all loving care to me

CANDIDA [*in his arms, smiling, to Eugene*] Am I your mother and sisters to you, Eugene?

MARCHBANKS [*rising with a fierce gesture of disgust*] Ah, never Out, then, into the night with me!

CANDIDA [*rising quickly*] You are not going like that, Eugene?

MARCHBANKS [*with the ring of a man's voice — no longer a boy's — in the words*] I know the hour when it strikes I am impatient to do what must be done

MORELL [*who has also risen*] Candida dont let him do anything rash

CANDIDA [*confident, smiling at Eugene*] Oh, there is no fear He has learnt to live without happiness

MARCHBANKS I no longer desire happiness life is nobler than that Parson James I give you my happiness with both hands I love you because you have filled the heart of the woman I loved Goodbye [*He goes towards the door*]

CANDIDA One last word [*He stops, but without turning to her She goes to him*] How old are you, Eugene?

MARCHBANKS As old as the world now This morning I was eighteen

CANDIDA Eighteen! Will you, for my sake, make a little poem out of the two sentences I am going to say to you? And will you promise to repeat it to yourself whenever you think of me?

MARCHBANKS [*without moving*] Say the sentences

CANDIDA When I am thirty, she will be forty-five When I am sixty, she will be seventy-five

MARCHBANKS [*turning to her*] In a hundred years, we shall be the same age But I have a better secret than that

in my heart. Let me go now. The night outside grows impatient.

CANDIDA Goodbye. [*She takes his face in her hands; and as he divines her intention and falls on his knees, she kisses his forehead. Then he flies out into the night. She turns to Morell, holding out her arms to him*]. Ah, James!

They embrace. But they do not know the secret in the poet's heart.

THE MAN OF DESTINY

The twelfth of May, 1796, in north Italy, at Tavazzano, on the road from Lodi to Milan. The afternoon sun is blazing serenely over the plains of Lombardy, treating the Alps with respect and the ant-hills with indulgence, neither disgusted by the basking of the swine in the villages nor hurt by its cool reception in the churches, but ruthlessly disdainful of two hordes of mischievous insects which are the French and Austrian armies. Two days before, at Lodi, the Austrians tried to prevent the French from crossing the river by the narrow bridge there, but the French, commanded by a general aged 27, Napoleon Bonaparte, who does not respect the rules of war, rushed the fireswept bridge, supported by a tremendous cannonade in which the young general assisted with his own hands. Cannonading is his technical speciality he has been trained in the artillery under the old régime, and made perfect in the military arts of shirking his duties, swindling the paymaster over travelling expenses, and dignifying war with the noise and smoke of cannon, as depicted in all military portraits. He is, however, an original observer, and has perceived, for the first time since the invention of gunpowder, that a cannon ball, if it strikes a man, will kill him. To a thorough grasp of this remarkable discovery he adds a highly evolved faculty for physical geography and for the calculation of times and distances. He has prodigious powers of work, and a clear realistic knowledge of human nature in public affairs, having seen it exhaustively tested in that department during the French Revolution. He is imaginative without illusions, and creative without religion, loyalty, patriotism or any of the common ideals. Not that he is incapable of these ideals on the contrary, he has swallowed them all in his boyhood, and now, having a keen dramatic faculty, is extremely clever at playing upon them by the arts of the actor and stage manager. Withal, he is no spoiled child. Poverty, ill-luck, the shifts of impecunious shabby-gentility, repeated failure as a would-be author, humiliation as a rebuffed time server, reproof and punishment as an incompetent and dishonest officer, an escape from dismissal from the service so narrow that if the emigration of the nobles had not raised the value of even the most rascally lieutenant to the famine price of a general he would have been swept contemptuously from the army these trials have ground his conceit out

of him, and forced him to be self-sufficient and to understand that to such men as he is the world will give nothing that he cannot take from it by force. In this the world is not free from cowardice and folly, for Napoleon, as a merciless cannonader of political rubbish, is making himself useful indeed, it is even now impossible to live in England without sometimes feeling how much that country lost in not being conquered by him as well as by Julius Cæsar.

However, on this May afternoon in 1796, it is early days with him. He has but recently been promoted general, partly by using his wife to seduce the Directory (then governing France), partly by the scarcity of officers caused by the emigration as aforesaid, partly by his faculty of knowing a country, with all its roads, rivers, hills and valleys, as he knows the palm of his hand; and largely by that new faith of his in the efficacy of firing cannons at people. His army is, as to discipline, in a state which has so greatly shocked some modern writers before whom the following story has been enacted, that they, impressed with the later glory of 'L'Empereur,' have altogether refused to credit it. But Napoleon is not L'Empereur yet his men call him *Le Petit Caporal*, as he is still in the stage of gaining influence over them by displays of pluck. He is not in a position to force his will on them in orthodox military fashion by the cat o' nine tails. The French Revolution, which has escaped suppression solely through the monarchy's habits of being at least four years in arrear with its soldiers in the matter of pay, has substituted for that habit, as far as possible, the habit of not paying at all, except in promises and patriotic flatteries which are not compatible with martial law of the Prussian type. Napoleon has therefore approached the Alps in command of men without money, in rags, and consequently indisposed to stand much discipline, especially from upstart generals. This circumstance, which would have embarrassed an idealist soldier, has been worth a thousand cannon to Napoleon. He has said to his army 'You have patriotism and courage, but you have no money, no clothes, and hardly anything to eat. In Italy there are all these things, and glory as well, to be gained by a devoted army led by a general who regards loot as the natural right of the soldier. I am such a general. *En avant, mes enfants!*' The result has entirely justified him. The army conquers Italy as the locusts conquered Cyprus. They fight all day and march all night, covering impossible distances and appearing

in incredible places, not because every soldier carries a field marshal's baton in his knapsack, but because he hopes to carry at least half a dozen silver forks there next day

It must be understood, by the way, that the French army does not make war on the Italians. It is there to rescue them from the tyranny of their Austrian conquerors, and confer republican institutions on them, so that in incidentally looting them it merely makes free with the property of its friends, who ought to be grateful to it, and perhaps would be if ingratitude were not the proverbial failing of their country. The Austrians, whom it fights, are a thoroughly respectable regular army, well disciplined, commanded by gentlemen versed in orthodox campaigning at the head of them Beaulieu, practising the classic art of war under orders from Vienna, and getting horribly beaten by Napoleon, who acts on his own responsibility in defiance of professional precedents or orders from Paris. Even when the Austrians win a battle, all that is necessary is to wait until their routine obliges them to return to their quarters for afternoon tea, so to speak, and win it back again from them—a course pursued later on with brilliant success at Marengo. On the whole, with his foe handicapped by Austrian statesmanship, classic generalship, and the exigencies of the aristocratic social structure of Viennese society, Napoleon finds it possible to be irresistible without working heroic miracles. The world, however, likes miracles and heroes, and is quite incapable of conceiving the action of such forces as academic militarism or Viennese drawing-roomism. Hence it has already begun to manufacture 'L'Empereur,' and thus to make it difficult for the romanticists of a hundred years later to credit the hitherto unrecorded little scene now in question at Tavazzano.

The best quarters at Tavazzano are at a little inn, the first house reached by travellers passing through the place from Milan to Lodi. It stands in a vineyard, and its principal room, a pleasant refuge from the summer heat, is open so widely at the back to this vineyard that it is almost a large veranda. The bolder children, much excited by the alarms and excursions of the past few days, and by an irruption of French troops at six o'clock, know that the French commander has quartered himself in this room, and are divided between a craving to peep in at the front windows, and a mortal dread of the sentinel, a young gentleman-soldier who, having no natural moustache, has had

a most ferocious one painted on his face with boot blacking by his sergeant. As his heavy uniform, like all the uniforms of that day, is designed for parade without the least reference to his health or comfort, he perspires profusely in the sun, and his painted moustache has run in little streaks down his chin and round his neck, except where it has dried in stiff japanned flakes and had its sweeping outline chipped off in grotesque little bays and headlands, making him unspeakably ridiculous in the eye of History a hundred years later, but monstrous and horrible to the contemporary north Italian infant, to whom nothing would seem more natural than that he should relieve the monotony of his guard by pitchforking a stray child up on his bayonet, and eating it uncooked. Nevertheless one girl of bad character, in whom an instinct of privilege with soldiers is already stirring, does peep in at the safest window for a moment before a glance and a clink from the sentinel sends her flying. Most of what she sees she has seen before the vineyard at the back, with the old winepress and a cart among the vines; the door close on her right leading to the street entry, the landlord's best sideboard, now in full action for dinner, further back on the same side; the fireplace on the other side with a couch near it, another door, leading to the inner rooms, between it and the vineyard, and the table in the middle set out with a repast of Milanese risotto, cheese, grapes, bread, olives, and a big wickered flask of red wine

The landlord, Giuseppe Grandi, she knows well. He is a swarthy vivacious shrewdly cheerful black-curled bullet headed grinning little innkeeper of 40. Naturally an excellent host, he is in the highest spirits this evening at his good fortune in having as his guest the French commander to protect him against the license of the troops. He actually sports a pair of gold earrings which would otherwise have been hidden carefully under the winepress with his little equipment of silver plate

Napoleon, sitting facing her on the further side of the table, she sees for the first time. He is working hard, partly at his meal, which he has discovered how to dispatch in ten minutes by attacking all the courses simultaneously (this practise is the beginning of his downfall), and partly at a military map on which he from time to time marks the position of the forces by taking a grapeskin from his mouth and planting it on the map with his thumb like a wafer. There is no revolutionary untidiness about his dress or person, but his elbow has displaced most of

the dishes and glasses, and his long hair trails into the risotto when he forgets it and leans more intently over the map

GIUSEPPE Will your excellency –

NAPOLEON [*intent on his map, but cramming himself mechanically with his left hand*] Dont talk I'm busy

GIUSEPPE [*with perfect goodhumor*] Excellency I obey

NAPOLEON Some red ink

GIUSEPPE Alas! excellency, there is none

NAPOLEON [*with Corsican facetiousness*] Kill something and bring me its blood

GIUSEPPE [*grinning*] There is nothing but your excellency's horse, the sentinel, the lady upstairs, and my wife

NAPOLEON Kill your wife

GIUSEPPE Willingly, your excellency, but unhappily I am not strong enough She would kill me

NAPOLEON That will do equally well

GIUSEPPE Your excellency does me too much honor [*Stretching his hand towards the flask*] Perhaps some wine will answer your excellency's purpose

NAPOLEON [*hastily protecting the flask, and becoming quite serious*] Wine! No that would be waste You are all the same waste! waste! waste! [*He marks the map with gravy, using his fork as a pen*] Clear away [*He finishes his wine, pushes back his chair, and uses his napkin, stretching his legs and leaning back, but still frowning and thinking*]

GIUSEPPE [*clearing the table and removing the things to a tray on the sideboard*] Every man to his trade, excellency We inn-keepers have plenty of cheap wine we think nothing of spilling it You great generals have plenty of cheap blood you think nothing of spilling it Is it not so, excellency?

NAPOLEON Blood costs nothing wine costs money [*He rises and goes to the fireplace*]

GIUSEPPE They say you are careful of everything except human life, excellency

NAPOLEON Human life, my friend, is the only thing that takes care of itself [*He throws himself at his ease on the couch*]

GIUSEPPE [*admiring him*] Ah, excellency, what fools we all are beside you! If I could only find out the secret of your success!

NAPOLEON You would make yourself Emperor of Italy, eh?

GIUSEPPE Too troublesome, excellency I leave all that to you Besides, what would become of my inn if I were Emperor? See how you enjoy looking on at me whilst I keep the inn for you and wait on you! Well, I shall enjoy looking on at you whilst you become Emperor of Europe, and govern the country for me. [*As he chatters, he takes the cloth off deftly without removing the map, and finally takes the corners in his hands and the middle in his mouth, to fold it up*].

NAPOLEON Emperor of Europe, eh? Why only Europe?

GIUSEPPE. Why, indeed? Emperor of the world, excellency! Why not? [*He folds and rolls up the cloth, emphasizing his phrase by the steps of the process*] One man is like another [*fold*] one country is like another [*fold*] one battle is like another. [*At the last fold, he slaps the cloth on the table and deftly rolls it up, adding, by way of peroration*] Conquer one conquer all. [*He takes the cloth to the sideboard, and puts it in a drawer*]

NAPOLEON And govern for all, fight for all, be everybody's servant under cover of being everybody's master, Giuseppe.

GIUSEPPE [*at the sideboard*] Excellency?

NAPOLEON I forbid you to talk to me about myself.

GIUSEPPE [*coming to the foot of the couch*] Pardon Your excellency is so unlike other great men. It is the subject they like best

NAPOLEON. Well, talk to me about the subject they like next best, whatever that may be.

GIUSEPPE [*unabashed*] Willingly, your excellency. Has your excellency by any chance caught a glimpse of the lady upstairs?

NAPOLEON [*sitting up promptly*] How old is she?

GIUSEPPE. The right age, excellency

NAPOLEON. Do you mean seventeen or thirty?

GIUSEPPE Thirty, excellency.

NAPOLEON Goodlooking?

GIUSEPPE I cannot see with your excellency's eyes every man must judge that for himself In my opinion, excellency, a fine figure of a lady [*Slyly*] Shall I lay the table for her collation here?

NAPOLEON [*brusquely, rising*] No lay nothing here until the officer for whom I am waiting comes back [*He looks at his watch, and takes to walking to and fro between the fireplace and the vineyard*]

GIUSEPPE [*with conviction*] Excellency believe me, he has been captured by the accursed Austrians He dare not keep you waiting if he were at liberty

NAPOLEON [*turning at the edge of the shadow of the veranda*] Giuseppe if that turns out to be true, it will put me into such a temper that nothing short of hanging you and your whole household, including the lady upstairs, will satisfy me

GIUSEPPE We are all cheerfully at your excellency's disposal, except the lady I cannot answer for her, but no lady could resist you, General

NAPOLEON [*sourly, resuming his march*] Hm! You will never be hanged There is no satisfaction in hanging a man who does not object to it

GIUSEPPE [*sympathetically*] Not the least in the world, excellency is there? [*Napoleon again looks at his watch, evidently growing anxious*] Ah, one can see that you are a great man, General you know how to wait If it were a corporal now, or a sub-lieutenant, at the end of three minutes he would be swearing, fuming, threatening, pulling the house about our ears

NAPOLEON Giuseppe your flatteries are insufferable Go and talk outside [*He sits down again at the table, with his jaws in his hands, and his elbows propped on the map, poring over it with a troubled expression*]

GIUSEPPE Willingly, your excellency You shall not be disturbed [*He takes up the tray and prepares to withdraw*]

NAPOLEON The moment he comes back, send him to me

GIUSEPPE Instantaneously, your excellency.

A LADY'S VOICE [*calling from some distant part of the inn*]

Giusep-pe! [*The voice is very musical, and the two final notes make an ascending interval*].

NAPOLEON [*startled*] Who's that?

GIUSEPPE. The lady, excellency.

NAPOLEON. The lady upstairs?

GIUSEPPE. Yes, excellency. The strange lady.

NAPOLEON Strange? Where does she come from?

GIUSEPPE [*with a shrug*] Who knows? She arrived here just before your excellency in a hired carriage belonging to the Golden Eagle at Borghetto. By herself, excellency No servants A dressing bag and a trunk that is all The postilion says she left a horse at the Golden Eagle. A charger, with military trappings

NAPOLEON A woman with a charger! French or Austrian?

GIUSEPPE French, excellency

NAPOLEON Her husband's charger, no doubt Killed at Lodi, poor fellow.

THE LADY'S VOICE [*the two final notes now making a peremptory descending interval*] Giuseppe!

NAPOLEON [*rising to listen*] That's not the voice of a woman whose husband was killed yesterday.

GIUSEPPE. Husbands are not always regretted, excellency.

[*Calling*] Coming, lady, coming [*He makes for the inner door*].

NAPOLEON [*arresting him with a strong hand on his shoulder*] Stop Let her come

VOICE. Giuseppe! [*impatiently*]

GIUSEPPE Let me go, excellency It is my point of honor as an innkeeper to come when I am called I appeal to you as a soldier.

A MAN'S VOICE [*outside, at the inn door, shouting*] Here, someone Hollo! Landlord! Where are you? [*Somebody raps vigorously with a whip handle on a bench in the passage*].

NAPOLEON [*suddenly becoming the commanding officer again and throwing Giuseppe off*] My man at last [*Pointing to the inner door*] Go Attend to your business the lady is calling you

[He goes to the fireplace and stands with his back to it with a determined military air]

USEPPE [with bated breath, snatching up his tray] Certainly, excellency [He hurries out by the inner door]

THE MAN'S VOICE [impatiently] Are you all asleep here?

The other door is kicked rudely open. A dusty sub-lieutenant bursts into the room. He is a tall chuckle-headed young man of 24, with the complexion and style of a man of rank, and a self-assurance on that ground which the French Revolution has failed to shake in the smallest degree. He has a thick silly lip, an eager credulous eye, an obstinate nose, and a loud confident voice. A young man without fear, without reverence, without imagination, without sense, hopelessly insusceptible to the Napoleonic or any other idea, stupendously egotistical, eminently qualified to rush in where angels fear to tread, yet of a vigorous babbling vitality which bustles him into the thick of things. He is just now boiling with vexation, attributable by a superficial observer to his impatience at not being promptly attended to by the staff of the inn, but in which a more discerning eye can perceive a certain moral depth, indicating a more permanent and momentous grievance. On seeing Napoleon, he is sufficiently taken aback to check himself and salute, but he does not betray by his manner any of that prophetic consciousness of Marengo and Austerlitz, Waterloo and St Helena, or the Napoleonic pictures of Delaroche and Meissonier, which later ages expect from him.

NAPOLEON [watch in hand] Well, sir, you have come at last. Your instructions were that I should arrive here at six, and find you waiting for me with my mail from Paris and with despatches. It is now twenty minutes to eight. You were sent on this service as a hard rider with the fastest horse in the camp. You arrive a hundred minutes late, on foot. Where is your horse?

THE LIEUTENANT [moodily pulling off his gloves and dashing them with his cap and whip on the table] Ah! where indeed? That's just what I should like to know, General. [With emotion] You don't know how fond I was of that horse.

NAPOLEON [angrily sarcastic] Indeed! [With sudden misgiving] Where are the letters and despatches?

THE LIEUTENANT [*importantly, rather pleased than otherwise at having some remarkable news*] I dont know.

NAPOLEON [*unable to believe his ears*] You dont know!

LIEUTENANT. No more than you do, General Now I suppose I shall be court-martialled. Well, I dont mind being court-martialled, but [*with solemn determination*] I tell you, General, if ever I catch that innocent looking youth, I'll spoil his beauty, the slimy little liar! I'll make a picture of him. I'll –

NAPOLEON [*advancing from the hearth to the table*] What innocent looking youth? Pull yourself together, sir, will you, and give an account of yourself.

LIEUTENANT [*facing him at the opposite side of the table, leaning on it with his fists*] Oh, I'm all right, General. I'm perfectly ready to give an account of myself. I shall make the court-martial thoroughly understand that the fault was not mine Advantage has been taken of the better side of my nature; and I'm not ashamed of it. But with all respect to you as my commanding officer, General, I say again that if ever I set eyes on that son of Satan, I'll –

NAPOLEON [*angrily*] So you said before.

LIEUTENANT [*drawing himself upright*] I say it again Just wait until I catch him Just wait thats all [*He folds his arms resolutely, and breathes hard, with compressed lips*]

NAPOLEON. I am waiting, sir. For your explanation.

LIEUTENANT [*confidently*] Youll change your tone, General, when you hear what has happened to me.

NAPOLEON Nothing has happened to you, sir you are alive and not disabled Where are the papers entrusted to you?

LIEUTENANT. Nothing happened to me! Nothing! He swore eternal brotherhood with me Was that nothing? He said my eyes reminded him of his sister's eyes Was that nothing? He cried – actually cried – over the story of my separation from Angelica. Was that nothing? He paid for both bottles of wine, though he only ate bread and grapes himself Perhaps you call that nothing He gave me his pistols and his horse and his despatches – most important

despatches – and let me go away with them [*Triumphantly, seeing that he has reduced Napoleon to blank stupefaction*] Was that nothing?

NAPOLÉON [*enfeebled by astonishment*] What did he do that for?

LIEUTENANT [*as if the reason were obvious*] To shew his confidence in me, of course [*Napoleon's jaw does not exactly drop, but its hinges become nerveless*] And I was worthy of his confidence I brought them all back honorably But would you believe it? when I trusted him with my pistols, and my horse, and my despatches –

NAPOLÉON What the devil did you do that for?

LIEUTENANT I'm telling you to shew my confidence in him And he betrayed it! abused it! never came back again! The thief! the swindler! the heartless treacherous little black-guard! You call that nothing, I suppose But look here, General [*again resorting to the table with his fists for greater emphasis*] you may put up with this outrage from the Austrians if you like, but speaking for myself personally, I tell you that if ever I catch –

NAPOLÉON [*turning on his heel in disgust and irritably resuming his march to and fro*] Yes you have said that more than once already

LIEUTENANT [*excitedly*] More than once! I'll say it fifty times, and whats more, I'll do it You'll see, General I'll shew my confidence in him, so I will I'll –

NAPOLÉON Yes, yes, sir no doubt you will What kind of man was he?

LIEUTENANT Well, I should think you ought to be able to tell from his conduct the kind of man he was

NAPOLÉON Psha! What was he like?

LIEUTENANT Like! He was like – well, well, you ought to have just seen the fellow that will give you a notion of what he was like He wont be like it five minutes after I catch him, for I tell you that if ever –

NAPOLÉON [*shouting furiously for the innkeeper*] Giuseppe! [*To the Lieutenant, out of all patience*] Hold your tongue, sir, if you can

LIEUTENANT [*plaintively*] I warn you it's no use trying to put the blame on me. How was I to know the sort of fellow he was? [*He takes a chair from between the sideboard and the outer door, places it near the table, and sits down*]. If you only knew how hungry and tired I am, you'd have more consideration.

GIUSEPPE [*returning*] What is it, excellency?

NAPOLÉON [*struggling with his temper*] Take this – this officer. Feed him; and put him to bed, if necessary. When he is in his right mind again, find out what has happened to him and bring me word [*To the Lieutenant*] Consider yourself under arrest, sir.

LIEUTENANT [*with sulky stiffness*] I was prepared for that. It takes a gentleman to understand a gentleman. [*He throws his sword on the table*]

GIUSEPPE [*with sympathetic concern*] Have you been attacked by the Austrians, lieutenant? Dear! dear! dear!

LIEUTENANT [*contemptuously*] Attacked! I could have broken his back between my finger and thumb. I wish I had, now. No, it was by appealing to the better side of my nature, that's what I can't get over. He said he'd never met a man he liked so much as me. He put his handkerchief round my neck because a gnat bit me, and my stock was chafing it. Look! [*He pulls a handkerchief from his stock. Giuseppe takes it and examines it*].

GIUSEPPE [*to Napoleon*] A lady's handkerchief, excellency. [*He smells it*] Perfumed

NAPOLÉON Eh? [*He takes it and looks at it attentively*] Hm! [*He smells it*] Ha! [*He walks thoughtfully across the room, looking at the handkerchief, which he finally sticks in the breast of his coat*]

LIEUTENANT. Good enough for him, anyhow. I noticed that he had a woman's hands when he touched my neck, with his coaxing fawning ways, the mean effeminate little hound [*Lowering his voice with thrilling intensity*] But mark my words, General. If ever –

THE LADY'S VOICE [*outside, as before*] Giuseppe!

LIEUTENANT [*petrified*] What was that?

GIUSEPPE Only a lady upstairs, lieutenant, calling me
LIEUTENANT Lady!

VOICE Giuseppe, Giuseppe where are you?

LIEUTENANT [*murderously*] Give me that sword [*He snatches up the sword and draws it*]

GIUSEPPE [*rushing forward and seizing his right arm*] What are you thinking of, lieutenant? It's a lady dont you hear? It's a woman's voice

LIEUTENANT It's his voice, I tell you Let me go [*He breaks away, and rushes to the edge of the veranda, where he posts himself, sword in hand, watching the door like a cat watching a mousehole*]

It opens, and the Strange Lady steps in She is tall and extraordinarily graceful, with a delicately intelligent, apprehensive, questioning face perception in the brow, sensitiveness in the nostrils, character in the chin all keen, refined, and original She is very feminine, but by no means weak the lithe tender figure is hung on a strong frame the hands and feet, neck and shoulders, are useful vigorous members, of full size in proportion to her stature, which perceptibly exceeds that of Napoleon and the innkeeper, and leaves her at no disadvantage with the lieutenant Only, her elegance and radiant charm keep the secret of her size and strength She is not, judging by her dress, an admirer of the latest fashions of the Directory, or perhaps she uses up her old dresses for travelling At all events she wears no jacket with extravagant lappels, no Greco-Tallien sham chiton, nothing, indeed, that the Princesse de Lamballe might not have worn Her dress of flowered silk is long waisted, with a Watteau pleat behind, but with the paniers reduced to mere rudiments, as she is too tall for them It is cut low in the neck, where it is eked out by a creamy fichu She is fair, with golden brown hair and grey eyes

She enters with the self-possession of a woman accustomed to the privileges of rank and beauty The innkeeper, who has excellent natural manners, is highly appreciative of her Napoleon is smitten self-conscious His color deepens he becomes stiffer and less at ease than before She is advancing in an infinitely well bred manner to pay her respects to him when the lieutenant pounces on her and seizes her right wrist As she recognizes him, she becomes deadly pale

There is no mistaking her expression a revelation of some fatal error, utterly unexpected, has suddenly appalled her in the midst of tranquillity, security, and victory The next moment a wave of angry color rushes up from beneath the creamy fichu and drowns her whole face One can see that she is blushing all over her body. Even the lieutenant, ordinarily incapable of observation, can see a thing when it is painted red for him. Interpreting the blush as the involuntary confession of black deceit confronted with its victim, he addresses her in a loud crow of retributive triumph.

LIEUTENANT. So I've got you, my lad. So you've disguised yourself, have you? [*In a voice of thunder, releasing her wrist*] Take off that skirt

GIUSEPPE [*remonstrating*] Oh, lieutenant!

LADY [*affrighted, but highly indignant as his having dared to touch her*] Gentlemen: I appeal to you [*To Napoleon*] You, sir, are an officer: a general. You will protect me will you not?

LIEUTENANT. Never mind him, General. Leave me to deal with him.

NAPOLÉON With him! With whom, sir? Why do you treat this lady in such a fashion?

LIEUTENANT Lady! He's a man! the man I shewed my confidence in. [*Raising his sword*] Here, you –

LADY [*running behind Napoleon and in her agitation clasping to her breast the arm which he extends before her as a fortification*] Oh, thank you, General. Keep him away.

NAPOLÉON Nonsense, sir. This is certainly a lady [*she suddenly drops his arm and blushes again*]; and you are under arrest Put down your sword, sir, instantly.

LIEUTENANT. General. I tell you he's an Austrian spy. He passed himself off on me as one of General Masséna's staff this afternoon, and now he's passing himself off on you as a woman Am I to believe my own eyes or not?

LADY. General. it must be my brother. He is on General Masséna's staff. He is very like me

LIEUTENANT [*his mind giving way*] Do you mean to say that you're not your brother, but your sister? the sister who was

THE MAN OF DESTINY

so like me? who had my beautiful blue eyes? It's a lie your eyes are not like mine they're exactly like your own

NAPOLLEON [*with contained exasperation*] Lieutenant will you obey my orders and leave the room, since you are convinced at last that this is no gentleman?

LIEUTENANT Gentleman! I should think not No gentleman would have abused my confidence –

NAPOLLEON [*out of all patience*] That will do, sir do you hear? Will you leave the room? I order you to leave the room

LADY Oh pray let me go instead

NAPOLLEON [*drily*] Excuse me, madam With all possible respect for your brother, I do not yet understand what an officer on General Massena's staff wants with my letters I have some questions to put to you

GIUSEPPE [*discreetly*] Come, lieutenant [*He opens the door*]

LIEUTENANT I'm off General take warning by me be on your guard against the better side of your nature [*To the lady*] Madam my apologies I thought you were the same person, only of the opposite sex, and that naturally misled me

LADY [*recovering her good humor*] It was not your fault was it? I'm so glad you're not angry with me any longer, lieutenant [*She offers her hand*]

LIEUTENANT [*bending gallantly to kiss it*] Oh, madam, not the least – [*Checking himself and looking at it*] You have your brother's hand And the same sort of ring!

LADY [*sweetly*] We are twins

LIEUTENANT That accounts for it [*He kisses her hand*] A thousand pardons I didn't mind about the despatches at all that's more the General's affair than mine it was the abuse of my confidence through the better side of my nature [*Taking his cap, gloves and whip from the table and going*] You'll excuse my leaving you, General, I hope Very sorry, I'm sure [*He talks himself out of the room Giuseppe follows him and shuts the door*]

NAPOLLEON [*looking after them with concentrated irritation*] Idiot!
The Strange Lady smiles sympathetically He comes frowning

down the room between the table and the fireplace, all his awkwardness gone now that he is alone with her.

LADY. How can I thank you, General, for your protection?

NAPOLEON [*turning on her suddenly*] My despatches: come!

[He puts out his hand for them].

LADY. General! *[She involuntarily puts her hand on her fichu as if to protect something there].*

NAPOLEON. You tricked that blockhead out of them. You disguised yourself as a man I want my despatches They are there in the bosom of your dress, under your hands.

LADY [*quickly removing her hands*] Oh, how unkindly you are speaking to me! *[She takes her handkerchief from her fichu]* You frighten me. *[She touches her eyes as if to wipe away a tear].*

NAPOLEON. I see you dont know me, madam, or you would save yourself the trouble of pretending to cry

LADY [*producing an effect of smiling through her tears*] Yes, I do know you You are the famous General Buonaparte *[She gives the name a marked Italian pronunciation, Bwawna-parr-te].*

NAPOLEON [*angrily, with the French pronunciation*] Bonaparte, madam, Bonaparte The papers, if you please

LADY But I assure you – *[He snatches the handkerchief rudely]* General! *[indignantly]*

NAPOLEON [*taking the other handkerchief from his breast*] You lent one of your handkerchiefs to my lieutenant when you robbed him. *[He looks at the two handkerchiefs]* They match one another *[He smells them]*. The same scent *[He flings them down on the table]* I am waiting for my despatches I shall take them, if necessary, with as little ceremony as I took the handkerchief.

LADY [*in dignified reproof*] General do you threaten women?

NAPOLEON [*bluntly*] Yes

LADY [*disconcerted, trying to gain time*] But I dont understand.
I –

NAPOLEON You understand perfectly You came here because your Austrian employers calculated that I was six leagues away I am always to be found where my enemies dont expect me You have walked into the lion's den

THE MAN OF DESTINY

Come! you are a brave woman Be a sensible one I have no time to waste The papers [*He advances a step ominously*]
 LADY [*breaking down in the childish rage of impotence, and throwing herself in tears on the chair left beside the table by the lieutenant*] I brave! How little you know! I have spent the day in an agony of fear I have a pain here from the tightening of my heart at every suspicious look, every threatening movement Do you think everyone is as brave as you? Oh, why will not you brave people do the brave things? Why do you leave them to us, who have no courage at all? I'm not brave I shrink from violence danger makes me miserable
 NAPOLEON [*interested*] Then why have you thrust yourself into danger?

LADY Because there is no other way I can trust nobody else And now it is all useless all because of you, who have no fear because you have no heart, no feeling, no – [*She breaks off, and throws herself on her knees*] Ah, General, let me go let me go without asking any questions You shall have your despatches and letters I swear it

NAPOLEON [*holding out his hand*] Yes I am waiting for them
She gasps, daunted by his ruthless promptitude into despair of moving him by cajolery She looks up perplexedly at him, racking her brains for some device to outwit him He meets her regard inflexibly

LADY [*rising at last with a quiet little sigh*] I will get them for you They are in my room [*She turns to the door*]

NAPOLEON I shall accompany you, madam

LADY [*drawing herself up with a noble air of offended delicacy*] I cannot permit you, General, to enter my chamber

NAPOLEON Then you shall stay here, madam, whilst I have your chamber searched for my papers

LADY [*spitefully, openly giving up her plan*] You may save yourself the trouble They are not there

NAPOLEON No I have already told you where they are [*pointing to her breast*]

LADY [*with pretty piteousness*] General I only want to keep one little private letter Only one Let me have it

THE MAN OF DESTINY

NAPOLÉON [*cold and stern*] Is that a reasonable demand, madam?

LADY [*encouraged by his not refusing point-blank*] No: but that is why you must grant it. Are your own demands reasonable? thousands of lives for the sake of your victories, your ambitions, your destiny! And what I ask is such a little thing. And I am only a weak woman, and you a brave man. [*She looks at him with her eyes full of tender pleading, and is about to kneel to him again*].

NAPOLÉON [*brusquely*] Get up, get up [*He turns moodily away and takes a turn across the room, pausing for a moment to say, over his shoulder*] You're talking nonsense, and you know it! [*She sits down submissively on the couch. When he turns and sees her despair, he feels that his victory is complete, and that he may now indulge in a little play with his victim. He comes back and sits beside her. She looks alarmed and moves a little away from him, but a ray of rallying hope beams from her eye. He begins like a man enjoying some secret joke*] How do you know I am a brave man?

LADY [*amazed*] You! General Buonaparte [*Italian pronunciation*]

NAPOLÉON. Yes, I, General Bonaparte [*emphasizing the French pronunciation*]

LADY. Oh, how can you ask such a question? you! who stood only two days ago at the bridge at Lodi, with the air full of death, fighting a duel with cannons across the river! [*Shuddering*]. Oh, you do brave things.

NAPOLÉON So do you

LADY. I! [*With a sudden odd thought*] Oh! Are you a coward?

NAPOLÉON [*laughing grimly and slapping his knees*] That is the one question you must never ask a soldier. The sergeant asks after the recruit's height, his age, his wind, his limb, but never after his courage.

LADY [*as if she had found it no laughing matter*] Ah, you can laugh at fear. Then you don't know what fear is.

NAPOLÉON. Tell me this. Suppose you could have got that letter by coming to me over the bridge at Lodi the day

THE MAN OF DESTINY

before yesterday! Suppose there had been no other way, and that this was a sure way – if only you escaped the cannon! [*She shudders and covers her eyes for a moment with her hands*] Would you have been afraid?

LADY Oh, horribly afraid, agonizingly afraid [*She presses her hands on her heart*] It hurts only to imagine it

NAPOLÉON [*inflexibly*] Would you have come for the despatches?

LADY [*overcome by the imagined horror*] Don't ask me I must have come

NAPOLÉON Why?

LADY Because I must Because there would have been no other way

NAPOLÉON [*with conviction*] Because you would have wanted my letter enough to bear your fear [*He rises suddenly, and deliberately poses for an oration*] There is only one universal passion fear Of all the thousand qualities a man may have, the only one you will find as certainly in the youngest drummer boy in my army as in me, is fear It is fear that makes men fight it is indifference that makes them run away fear is the mainspring of war Fear! I know fear well, better than you, better than any woman I once saw a regiment of good Swiss soldiers massacred by a mob in Paris because I was afraid to interfere I felt myself a coward to the tips of my toes as I looked on at it Seven months ago I revenged my shame by pounding that mob to death with cannon balls Well, what of that? Has fear ever held a man back from anything he really wanted – or a woman either? Never Come with me, and I will shew you twenty thousand cowards who will risk death every day for the price of a glass of brandy And do you think there are no women in the army, braver than the men, though their lives are worth more? Psha! I think nothing of your fear or your bravery If you had had to come across to me at Lodi, you would not have been afraid once on the bridge, every other feeling would have gone down before the necessity – the necessity – for making your

way to my side and getting what you wanted.

And now, suppose you had done all this! suppose you had come safely out with that letter in your hand, knowing that when the hour came, your fear had tightened, not your heart, but your grip of your own purpose! that it had ceased to be fear, and had become strength, penetration, vigilance, iron resolution! how would you answer then if you were asked whether you were a coward?

LADY [*rising*] Ah, you are a hero, a real hero.

NAPOLEON. Pooh! theres no such thing as a real hero. [*He strolls about the room, making light of her enthusiasm, but by no means displeased with himself for having evoked it*].

LADY. Ah yes, there is There is a difference between what you call my bravery and yours. You wanted to win the battle of Lodi for yourself and not for anyone else, didnt you?

NAPOLEON. Of course. [*Suddenly recollecting himself*] Stop no [*He pulls himself piously together, and says, like a man conducting a religious service*] I am only the servant of the French republic, following humbly in the footsteps of the heroes of classical antiquity. I win battles for humanity for my country, not for myself

LADY [*disappointed*] Oh, then you are only a womanish hero after all [*She sits down again, all her enthusiasm gone*]

NAPOLEON [*greatly astonished*] Womanish!

LADY [*listlessly*] Yes, like me [*With deep melancholy*] Do you think that if I wanted those despatches only for myself, I dare venture into a battle for them? No· if that were all, I should not have the courage to ask to see you at your hotel, even My courage is mere slavishness it is of use to me for my own purposes It is only through love, through pity, through the instinct to save and protect someone else, that I can do the things that terrify me

NAPOLEON [*contemptuously*] Pshaw [*He turns slightly away from her*]

LADY Aha! now you see that I'm not really brave [*Relapsing into petulant listlessness*] But what right have you to despise me if you only win your battles for others? for your country!

THE MAN OF DESTINY

through patriotism! That is what I call womanish it is so like a Frenchman!

NAPOLEON [*furiously*] I am no Frenchman

LADY [*innocently*] I thought you said you won the battle of Lodi for your country, General Bu — shall I pronounce it in Italian or French?

NAPOLEON You are presuming on my patience, madam I was born a French subject, but not in France

LADY [*affecting a marked access of interest in him*] You were not born a subject at all, I think

NAPOLEON [*greatly pleased*] Eh? Eh? You think not

LADY I am sure of it

NAPOLEON Well, well, perhaps not [*The self-complacency of his assent catches his own ear He stops short, reddening Then, composing himself into a solemn attitude, modelled on the heroes of classical antiquity, he takes a high moral tone*] But we must not live for ourselves alone, little one Never forget that we should always think of others, and work for others, and lead and govern them for their own good Self-sacrifice is the foundation of all true nobility of character

LADY [*again relaxing her attitude with a sigh*] Ah, it is easy to see that you have never tried it, General

NAPOLEON [*indignantly, forgetting all about Brutus and Scipio*] What do you mean by that speech, madam?

LADY Havnt you noticed that people always exaggerate the value of the things they havnt got? The poor think they need nothing but riches to be quite happy and good Everybody worships truth, purity, unselfishness, for the same reason because they have no experience of them Oh, if they only knew!

NAPOLEON [*with angry derision*] If they only knew! Pray do you know?

LADY Yes I had the misfortune to be born good [*Glancing up at him for a moment*] And it is a misfortune, I can tell you, General I really am truthful and unselfish and all the rest of it, and it's nothing but cowardice, want of character, want of being really, strongly, positively oneself

NAPOLEON. Ha? [*turning to her quickly with a flash of strong interest*]

LADY [*earnestly, with rising enthusiasm*] What is the secret of your power? Only that you believe in yourself. You can fight and conquer for yourself and for nobody else. You are not afraid of your own destiny. You teach us what we all might be if we had the will and courage; and that [*suddenly sinking on her knees before him*] is why we all begin to worship you. [*She kisses his hands*].

NAPOLEON [*embarrassed*] Tut! tut! Pray rise, madam.

LADY Do not refuse my homage. it is your right. You will be Emperor of France –

NAPOLEON [*hurriedly*] Take care. Treason!

LADY [*insisting*] Yes, Emperor of France; then of Europe; perhaps of the world. I am only the first subject to swear allegiance [*Again kissing his hand*] My Emperor!

NAPOLEON [*overcome, raising her*] Pray! pray! No, no. this is folly. Come. be calm, be calm. [*Petting her*] There! there! my girl

LADY [*struggling with happy tears*] Yes, I know it is an impertinence in me to tell you what you must know far better than I do. But you are not angry with me, are you?

NAPOLEON. Angry! No, no. not a bit, not a bit. Come. you are a very clever and sensible and interesting woman [*He pats her on the cheek*] Shall we be friends?

LADY [*enraptured*] Your friend! You will let me be your friend! Oh! [*She offers him both her hands with a radiant smile*]. You see. I shew my confidence in you.

This incautious echo of the lieutenant undoes her. Napoleon starts. his eyes flash. he utters a yell of rage.

NAPOLEON What!!!

LADY. Whats the matter?

NAPOLEON. Shew your confidence in me! So that I may shew my confidence in you in return by letting you give me the slip with the despatches, eh? Ah, Dalila, Dalila, you have been trying your tricks on me; and I have been as gross a gull as my jackass of a lieutenant [*Menacingly*]

THE MAN OF DESTINY

Come the despatches Quick I am not to be trifled with now

LADY [*flying round the couch*] General –

NAPOLEON Quick, I tell you [*He passes swiftly up the middle of the room and intercepts her as she makes for the vineyard*]

LADY [*at bay, confronting him and giving way to her temper*] You dare address me in that tone

NAPOLEON Dare!

LADY Yes, dare Who are you that you should presume to speak of me in that coarse way Oh, the vile, vulgar Corsican adventurer comes out in you very easily

NAPOLEON [*beside himself*] You she devil! [*Savagely*] Once more, and only once, will you give me those papers or shall I tear them from you? – by force!

LADY Tear them from me by force!

As he glares at her like a tiger about to spring, she crosses her arms on her breast in the attitude of a martyr The gesture and pose instantly awaken his theatrical instinct he forgets his rage in the desire to shew her that in acting, too, she has met her match He keeps her a moment in suspense, then suddenly clears up his countenance, puts his hands behind him with provoking coolness, looks at her up and down a couple of times, takes a pinch of snuff, wipes his fingers carefully and puts up his handkerchief, her heroic pose becoming more and more ridiculous all the time

NAPOLEON [*at last*] Well?

LADY [*disconcerted, but with her arms still crossed devotedly*] Well what are you going to do?

NAPOLEON Spoil your attitude

LADY You brute! [*Abandoning the attitude, she comes to the end of the couch, where she turns with her back to it, leaning against it and facing him with her hands behind her*]

NAPOLEON Ah, thats better. Now listen to me I like you Whats more, I value your respect

LADY You value what you have not got, then

NAPOLEON I shall have it presently Now attend to me Suppose I were to allow myself to be abashed by the respect due to your sex, your beauty, your heroism and all the rest

of it! Suppose I, with nothing but such sentimental stuff to stand between these muscles of mine and those papers which you have about you, and which I want and mean to have! suppose I, with the prize within my grasp, were to falter and sneak away with my hands empty; or, what would be worse, cover up my weakness by playing the magnanimous hero, and sparing you the violence I dared not use! would you not despise me from the depths of your woman's soul? Would any woman be such a fool? Well, Bonaparte can rise to the situation and act like a woman when it is necessary Do you understand?

The lady, without speaking, stands upright, and takes a packet of papers from her bosom. For a moment she has an intense impulse to dash them in his face. But her good breeding cuts her off from any vulgar method of relief She hands them to him politely, only averting her head. The moment he takes them, she hurries across to the other side of the room; sits down; and covers her face with her hands

NAPOLEON [*gloating over the papers*] Aha! Thats right Thats right. [*Before he opens them, he looks at her and says*] Excuse me. [*He sees that she is hiding her face*] Very angry with me, eh? [*He unties the packet, the seal of which is already broken, and puts it on the table to examine its contents*].

LADY [*quietly, taking down her hands and shewing that she is not crying, but only thinking*] No. You were right. But I am sorry for you.

NAPOLEON [*pausing in the act of taking the uppermost paper from the packet*] Sorry for me! Why?

LADY I am going to see you lose your honor.

NAPOLEON. Hm! Nothing worse than that? [*He takes up the paper*]

LADY. And your happiness.

NAPOLEON Happiness! Happiness is the most tedious thing in the world to me Should I be what I am if I cared for happiness? Anything else?

LADY Nothing

NAPOLEON Good.

THE MAN OF DESTINY

LADY Except that you will cut a very foolish figure in the eyes of France

NAPOLÉON [*quickly*] What? [*The hand unfolding the paper involuntarily stops The lady looks at him enigmatically in tranquil silence He throws the letter down and breaks out into a torrent of scolding*] What do you mean? Eh? Are you at your tricks again? Do you think I don't know what these papers contain? I'll tell you First, my information as to Beaulieu's retreat There are only two things he can do – leather-brained idiot that he is! – shut himself up in Mantua or violate the neutrality of Venice by taking Peschiera You are one of old Leather-brain's spies he has discovered that he has been betrayed, and has sent you to intercept the information at all hazards As if that could save him from me, the old fool! The other papers are only my private letters from Paris, of which you know nothing

LADY [*prompt and businesslike*] General let us make a fair division Take the information your spies have sent you about the Austrian army, and give me the Paris correspondence That will content me

NAPOLÉON [*his breath taken away by the coolness of the proposal*] A fair di – [*he gasps*] It seems to me, madam, that you have come to regard my letters as your own property, of which I am trying to rob you

LADY [*earnestly*] No on my honor I ask for no letter of yours not a word that has been written by you or to you That packet contains a stolen letter a letter written by a woman to a man a man not her husband a letter that means disgrace, infamy –

NAPOLÉON A love letter?

LADY [*bitter-sweetly*] What else but a love letter could stir up so much hate?

NAPOLÉON Why is it sent to me? To put the husband in my power, eh?

LADY No, no it can be of no use to you I swear that it will cost you nothing to give it to me It has been sent to you out of sheer malice solely to injure the woman who wrote it

NAPOLEON. Then why not send it to her husband instead of to me?

LADY [*completely taken aback*] Oh! [*Sinking back into the chair*] I – I don't know [*She breaks down*].

NAPOLEON. Aha! I thought so a little romance to get the papers back Per Bacco, I can't help admiring you I wish I could lie like that. It would save me a great deal of trouble

LADY [*wringing her hands*] Oh, how I wish I really had told you some lie! You would have believed me then. The truth is the one thing nobody will believe.

NAPOLEON [*with coarse familiarity, treating her as if she were a vivandière*] Capital! Capital! [*He puts his hands behind him on the table, and lifts himself on to it, sitting with his arms akimbo and his legs wide apart*] Come I am a true Corsican in my love for stories But I could tell them better than you if I set my mind to it Next time you are asked why a letter compromising a wife should not be sent to her husband, answer simply that the husband wouldn't read it Do you suppose, you goose, that a man wants to be compelled by public opinion to make a scene, to fight a duel, to break up his household, to injure his career by a scandal, when he can avoid it all by taking care not to know?

LADY [*revolted*] Suppose that packet contained a letter about your own wife?

NAPOLEON [*offended, coming off the table*] You are impertinent, madam

LADY [*humbly*] I beg your pardon Cæsar's wife is above suspicion

NAPOLEON [*with a deliberate assumption of superiority*] You have committed an indiscretion I pardon you In future, do not permit yourself to introduce real persons in your romances

LADY [*politely ignoring a speech which is to her only a breach of good manners*] General there really is a woman's letter there [*Pointing to the packet*] Give it to me.

NAPOLEON [*with brute conciseness*] Why?

LADY. She is an old friend we were at school together She

• has written to me imploring me to prevent the letter falling into your hands

NAPOLÉON Why has it been sent to me?

LADY Because it compromises the director Barras

NAPOLÉON [*frowning, and evidently startled*] Barras! [*Haughtily*]

Take care, madam The director Barras is my attached personal friend

LADY [*nodding placidly*] Yes You became friends through your wife

NAPOLÉON Again! Have I not forbidden you to speak of my wife? [*She keeps looking curiously at him, taking no account of the rebuke More and more irritated, he drops his haughty manner, of which he is himself somewhat impatient, and says suspiciously, lowering his voice*] Who is this woman with whom you sympathize so deeply?

LADY Oh, General! How could I tell you that?

NAPOLÉON [*ill humoredly, beginning to walk about again in angry perplexity*] Ay, ay stand by one another You are all the same, you women

LADY [*indignantly*] We are not all the same, any more than you are Do you think that if I loved another man, I should pretend to go on loving my husband, or be afraid to tell him or all the world? But this woman is not made that way She governs men by cheating them, and they like it, and let her govern them [*She turns her back to him in disdain*]

NAPOLÉON [*not attending to her*] Barras? Barras? [*Very threateningly, his face darkening*] Take care Take care do you hear? You may go too far

LADY [*innocently turning her face to him*] Whats the matter?

NAPOLÉON What are you hinting at? Who is this woman?

LADY [*meeting his angry searching gaze with tranquil indifference as she sits looking up at him*] A vain, silly, extravagant creature, with a very able and ambitious husband who knows he through and through knows that she has lied to him about her age, her income, her social position, about everything that silly women lie about knows that she is incapable of fidelity to any principle or any person, and yet cannot help

loving her – cannot help his man's instinct to make use of her for his own advancement with Barras.

NAPOLEON [*in a stealthy coldly furious whisper*] This is your revenge, you she cat, for having had to give me the letters.

LADY Nonsense! Or do you mean that you are that sort of man?

NAPOLEON [*exasperated, clasps his hands behind him, his fingers twitching, and says, as he walks irritably away from her to the fireplace*] This woman will drive me out of my senses [*To her*] Begone

LADY [*seated immovably*] Not without that letter

NAPOLEON Begone, I tell you [*Walking from the fireplace to the vineyard and back to the table*] You shall have no letter I dont like you Youre a detestable woman, and as ugly as Satan I dont choose to be pestered by strange women Be off [*He turns his back on her In quiet amusement, she leans her cheek on her hand and laughs at him. He turns again, angrily mocking her*] Ha! ha! ha! What are you laughing at?

LADY At you, General I have often seen persons of your sex getting into a pet and behaving like children, but I never saw a really great man do it before

NAPOLEON [*brutally, flinging the words in her face*] Psha! Flattery! Flattery! Coarse, impudent flattery!

LADY [*springing up with a bright flush in her cheeks*] Oh, you are too bad Keep your letters Read the story of your own dishonor in them, and much good may they do Goodbye. [*She goes indignantly towards the inner door*].

NAPOLEON My own – ! Stop. Come back Come back, I order you [*She proudly disregards his savagely peremptory tone and continues on her way to the door. He rushes at her, seizes her by the arm, and drags her back*] Now, what do you mean? Explain Explain I tell you, or – [*threatening her She looks at him with unflinching defiance*] Rrrr! you obstinate devil, you [*Throwing her arm away*] Why cant you answer a civil question?

LADY [*deeply offended by his violence*] Why do you ask me? You have the explanation

NAPOLÉON Where?

LADY [*pointing to the letters on the table*] There You have only to read it

He snatches the packet up, hesitates, looks at her suspiciously, and throws it down again

NAPOLÉON You seem to have forgotten your solicitude for the honor of your old friend

LADY I do not think she runs any risk now She does not quite understand her husband

NAPOLÉON I am to read the letter then? [*He stretches out his hand as if to take up the packet again, with his eye on her*]

LADY I do not see how you can very well avoid doing so now [*He instantly withdraws his hand*] Oh, don't be afraid You will find many interesting things in it

NAPOLÉON For instance?

LADY For instance, a duel with Barras, a domestic scene, a broken household, a public scandal, a checked career, all sorts of things

NAPOLÉON Hm! [*He looks at her, takes up the packet and looks at it, pursing his lips and balancing it in his hand, looks at her again, passes the packet into his left hand and puts it behind his back, raising his right to scratch the back of his head as he turns and goes up to the edge of the vineyard, where he stands for a moment looking out into the vines, deep in thought The Lady watches him in silence, somewhat slightly Suddenly he turns and comes back again, full of force and decision*] I grant your request, madam Your courage and resolution deserve to succeed Take the letters for which you have fought so well, and remember henceforth that you found the vile vulgar Corsican adventurer as generous to the vanquished after the battle as he was resolute in the face of the enemy before it [*He offers her the packet*]

LADY [*without taking it, looking hard at him*] What are you at now, I wonder? [*He dashes the packet furiously to the floor*] Aha! I've spoilt that attitude, I think [*She makes him a pretty mocking curtsy*]

NAPOLÉON [*snatching it up again*] Will you take the letters and begone [*advancing and thrusting them upon her*]?
 LADY [*escaping round the table*] No I don't want your letters.

NAPOLÉON. Ten minutes ago, nothing else would satisfy you

LADY [*keeping the table carefully between them*] Ten minutes ago you had not insulted me beyond all bearing

NAPOLÉON. I – [*swallowing his spleen*] I apologize.

LADY [*coolly*] Thanks. [*With forced politeness he offers her the packet across the table She retreats a step out of its reach and says*] But don't you want to know whether the Austrians are at Mantua or Peschiera?

NAPOLÉON I have already told you that I can conquer my enemies without the aid of spies, madam

LADY And the letter? don't you want to read that?

NAPOLÉON You have said that it is not addressed to me I am not in the habit of reading other people's letters [*He again offers the packet*]

LADY In that case there can be no objection to your keeping it All I wanted was to prevent your reading it [*Cheerfully*] Good afternoon, General [*She turns coolly towards the inner door*]

NAPOLÉON [*angrily flinging the packet on the couch*] Heaven grant me patience! [*He goes determinedly to the door, and places himself before it*] Have you any sense of personal danger? Or are you one of those women who like to be beaten black and blue?

LADY Thank you, General I have no doubt the sensation is very voluptuous, but I had rather not I simply want to go home that's all I was wicked enough to steal your despatches, but you have got them back; and you have forgiven me, because [*delicately reproducing his rhetorical cadence*] you are as generous to the vanquished after the battle as you are resolute in the face of the enemy before it Wont you say goodbye to me? [*She offers her hand sweetly*]

NAPOLÉON [*repulsing the advance with a gesture of concentrated rage, and opening the door to call fiercely*] Giuseppe! [*Louder*]

Giuseppe! [*He bangs the door to, and comes to the middle of the room. The lady goes a little way into the vineyard to avoid him*]

GIUSEPPE [*appearing at the door*] Excellency?

NAPOLEON Where is that fool?

GIUSEPPE He has had a good dinner, according to your instructions, excellency, and is now doing me the honor to gamble with me to pass the time

NAPOLEON Send him here Bring him here Come with him [*Giuseppe, with unruffled readiness, hurries off. Napoleon turns curtly to the lady, saying*] I must trouble you to remain some moments longer, madam [*He comes to the couch*]

She comes from the vineyard along the opposite side of the room to the sideboard, and posts herself there, leaning against it, watching him. He takes the packet from the couch and deliberately buttons it carefully into his breast pocket, looking at her meanwhile with an expression which suggests that she will soon find out the meaning of his proceedings, and will not like it. Nothing more is said until the Lieutenant arrives followed by Giuseppe, who stands modestly in attendance at the table. The Lieutenant, without cap, sword or gloves, and much improved in temper and spirit by his meal, chooses the lady's side of the room, and waits, much at his ease, for Napoleon to begin.

NAPOLEON Lieutenant

LIEUTENANT [*encouragingly*] General

NAPOLEON I cannot persuade this lady to give me much information, but there can be no doubt that the man who tricked you out of your charge was, as she admitted to you, her brother

LIEUTENANT [*triumphantly*] What did I tell you, General! What did I tell you!

NAPOLEON You must find that man Your honor is at stake, and the fate of the campaign, the destiny of France, of Europe, of humanity, perhaps, may depend on the information those despatches contain

LIEUTENANT Yes, I suppose they really are rather serious [*as if this hardly occurred to him before*]

NAPOLEON [*energetically*] They are so serious, sir, that if you

do not recover them, you will be degraded in the presence of your regiment

LIEUTENANT. Whew! The regiment wont like that, I can tell you.

NAPOLEON. Personally I am sorry for you. I would willingly hush up the affair if it were possible. But I shall be called to account for not acting on the despatches. I shall have to prove to all the world that I never received them, no matter what the consequences may be to you I am sorry; but you see that I cannot help myself.

LIEUTENANT [*goodnaturedly*] Oh, dont take it to heart, General. it's really very good of you Never mind what happens to me I shall scrape through somehow; and we'll beat the Austrians for you, despatches or no despatches I hope you wont insist on my starting off on a wild goose chase after the fellow now I havnt a notion where to look for him

GIUSEPPE [*deferentially*] You forget, Lieutenant: he has your horse

LIEUTENANT [*starting*] I forgot that [*Resolutely*] I'll go after him, General I'll find that horse if it's alive anywhere in Italy And I shant forget the despatches never fear Giuseppe go and saddle one of those mangy old post-horses of yours while I get my cap and sword and things Quick march Off with you [*bustling him*]

GIUSEPPE Instantly, Lieutenant, instantly [*He disappears in the vineyard, where the light is now reddening with the sunset*]

LIEUTENANT [*looking about him on his way to the inner door*] By the way, General, did I give you my sword or did I not? Oh, I remember now [*Fretfully*] It's all that nonsense about putting a man under arrest one never knows where to find - [*he talks himself out of the room*]

LADY [*still at the sideboard*] What does all this mean, General?

NAPOLEON He will not find your brother

LADY Of course not Theres no such person

NAPOLEON The despatches will be irrecoverably lost.

LADY Nonsense! They are inside your coat

THE MAN OF DESTINY

NAPOLEON You will find it hard, I think, to prove that wild statement [*The lady starts* *He adds, with clinching emphasis*] Those papers are lost

LADY [*anxiously, advancing to the corner of the table*] And that unfortunate young man's career will be sacrificed?

NAPOLEON His career! The fellow is not worth the gunpowder it would cost to have him shot [*He turns contemptuously and goes to the hearth, where he stands with his back to her*]

LADY [*wistfully*] You are very hard Men and women are nothing to you but things to be used, even if they are broken in the use

NAPOLEON [*turning on her*] Which of us has broken this fellow? I or you? Who tricked him out of the despatches? Did you think of his career then?

LADY [*conscience-stricken*] Oh, I never thought of that It was wicked of me, but I couldnt help it, could I? How else could I have got the papers? [*Supplicating*] General you will save him from disgrace

NAPOLEON [*laughing sourly*] Save him yourself, since you are so clever it was you who ruined him [*With savage intensity*] I hate a bad soldier

He goes out determinedly through the vineyard She follows him a few steps with an appealing gesture, but is interrupted by the return of the Lieutenant, gloved and capped, with his sword on, ready for the road He is crossing to the outer door when she intercepts him

LADY Lieutenant

LIEUTENANT [*importantly*] You musnt delay me, you know Duty, madam, duty

LADY [*imploringly*] Oh, sir, what are you going to do to my poor brother?

LIEUTENANT Are you very fond of him?

LADY I should die if anything happened to him You must spare him [*The Lieutenant shakes his head gloomily*] Yes, yes you must you shall he is not fit to die Listen to me If I tell you where to find him – if I undertake to place him in your hands a prisoner, to be delivered up by you to General

Bonaparte – will you promise me on your honor as an officer and a gentleman not to fight with him or treat him unkindly in any way?

LIEUTENANT But suppose he attacks me He has my pistols

LADY He is too great a coward.

LIEUTENANT I don't feel so sure about that He's capable of anything

LADY If he attacks you, or resists you in any way, I release you from your promise

LIEUTENANT My promise! I didn't mean to promise. Look here you're as bad as he is. you've taken an advantage of me through the better side of my nature. What about my horse?

LADY. It is part of the bargain that you are to have your horse and pistols back

LIEUTENANT. Honor bright?

LADY Honor bright [*She offers her hand*]

LIEUTENANT [*taking it and holding it*] All right I'll be as gentle as a lamb with him. His sister's a very pretty woman [*He attempts to kiss her*]

LADY [*slipping away from him*] Oh, Lieutenant! You forget your career is at stake – the destiny of Europe – of humanity

LIEUTENANT Oh, bother the destiny of humanity! [*Making for her*] Only a kiss.

LADY [*retreating round the table*] Not until you have regained your honor as an officer Remember. you have not captured my brother yet

LIEUTENANT [*seductively*] You'll tell me where he is, won't you?

LADY I have only to send him a certain signal; and he will be here in quarter of an hour

LIEUTENANT He's not far off, then

LADY No quite close Wait here for him when he gets my message he will come here at once and surrender himself to you. You understand?

LIEUTENANT [*intellectually overtaxed*] Well, it's a little complicated; but I daresay it will be all right.

LADY And now, whilst youre waiting, dont you think you had better make terms with the General?

LIEUTENANT Oh, look here this is getting frightfully complicated What terms?

LADY Make him promise that if you catch my brother he will consider that you have cleared your character as a soldier He will promise anything you ask on that condition

LIEUTENANT Thats not a bad idea Thank you I think I'll try it

LADY Do And mind, above all things, dont let him see how clever you are

LIEUTENANT I understand He'd be jealous

LADY Dont tell him anything except that you are resolved to capture my brother or perish in the attempt He wont believe you Then you will produce my brother -

LIEUTENANT [*interrupting as he masters the plot*] And have the laugh at him! I say what a jolly clever woman you are! [*Shouting*] Giuseppe!

LADY Sh! Not a word to Giuseppe about me [*She puts her finger on her lips He does the same They look at one another warningly Then, with a ravishing smile, she changes the gesture into wafting him a kiss, and runs out through the inner door Electrified, he bursts into a volley of chuckles*]

Giuseppe comes back by the outer door

GIUSEPPE The horse is ready, Lieutenant

LIEUTENANT I'm not going just yet Go and find the General and tell him I want to speak to him

GIUSEPPE [*shaking his head*] That will never do, Lieutenant

LIEUTENANT Why not?

GIUSEPPE In this wicked world a general may send for a lieutenant, but a lieutenant must not send for a general

LIEUTENANT Oh, you think he wouldnt like it Well, perhaps youre right one has to be awfully particular about that sort of thing now we're a republic

Napoleon reappears, advancing from the vineyard, buttoning the breast of his coat, pale and full of gnawing thoughts

GIUSEPPE [*unconscious of Napoleon's approach*] Quite true, Lieu-

tenant, quite true. You are all like innkeepers now in France you have to be polite to everybody

NAPOLEON [*putting his hand on Giuseppe's shoulder*]. And that destroys the whole value of politeness, eh?

LIEUTENANT. The very man I wanted! See here, General, suppose I catch that fellow for you!

NAPOLEON [*with ironical gravity*] You will not catch him, my friend

LIEUTENANT. Aha! you think so; but you'll see Just wait.

Only, if I do catch him and hand him over to you, will you cry quits? Will you drop all this about degrading me in the presence of my regiment? Not that I mind, you know, but still no regiment likes to have all the other regiments laughing at it

NAPOLEON [*a cold ray of humor striking pallidly across his gloom*] What shall we do with this officer, Giuseppe? Everything he says is wrong

GIUSEPPE [*promptly*] Make him a general, excellency; and then everything he says will be right

LIEUTENANT [*crowing*] Haw-aw! [*He throws himself ecstatically on the couch to enjoy the joke*].

NAPOLEON [*laughing and pinching Giuseppe's ear*] You are thrown away in this inn, Giuseppe. [*He sits down and places Giuseppe before him like a schoolmaster with a pupil*] Shall I take you away with me and make a man of you?

GIUSEPPE [*shaking his head rapidly and repeatedly*] No no no no no no no All my life long people have wanted to make a man of me When I was a boy, our good priest wanted to make a man of me by teaching me to read and write Then the organist at Melegnano wanted to make a man of me by teaching me to read music The recruiting sergeant would have made a man of me if I had been a few inches taller But it always meant making me work, and I am too lazy for that, thank Heaven! So I taught myself to cook and became an innkeeper, and now I keep servants to do the work, and have nothing to do myself except talk, which suits me perfectly

NAPOLEON [*looking at him thoughtfully*] You are satisfied?

GIUSEPPE [*with cheerful conviction*] Quite, excellency

NAPOLEON And you have no devouring devil inside you who must be fed with action and victory gorged with them night and day who makes you pay, with the sweat of your brain and body, weeks of Herculean toil for ten minutes of enjoyment who is at once your slave and your tyrant, your genius and your doom who brings you a crown in one hand and the oar of a galley slave in the other who shews you all the kingdoms of the earth and offers to make you their master on condition that you become their servant! have you nothing of that in you?

GIUSEPPE Nothing of it! Oh, I assure you, excellency, my devouring devil is far worse than that He offers me no crowns and kingdoms he expects to get everything for nothing sausages! omelettes! grapes! cheese! polenta! wine! three times a day, excellency nothing less will content him

LIEUTENANT Come drop it, Giuseppe you're making me feel hungry again

Giuseppe, with an apologetic shrug, retires from the conversation

NAPOLEON [*turning to the Lieutenant with sardonic politeness*] I hope I have not been making you feel ambitious

LIEUTENANT Not at all I don't fly so high Besides, I'm better as I am men like me are wanted in the army just now The fact is, the Revolution was all very well for civilians, but it won't work in the army You know what soldiers are, General they will have men of family for their officers A subaltern must be a gentleman, because he's so much in contact with the men But a general, or even a colonel, may be any sort of riff-raff if he understands his job well enough A lieutenant is a gentleman all the rest is chance Why, who do you suppose won the battle of Lodi? I'll tell you My horse did

NAPOLEON [*rising*] Your folly is carrying you too far, sir Take care

LIEUTENANT Not a bit of it You remember all that red-hot cannonade across the river the Austrians blazing away

at you to keep you from crossing, and you blazing away at them to keep them from setting the bridge on fire? Did you notice where I was then?

NAPOLEON. I am sorry. I am afraid I was rather occupied at the moment.

GIUSEPPE [*with eager admiration*] They say you jumped off your horse and worked the big guns with your own hands, General.

LIEUTENANT. That was a mistake: an officer should never let himself down to the level of his men. [*Napoleon looks at him dangerously, and begins to walk tigerishly to and fro*]. But you might have been firing away at the Austrians still if we cavalry fellows hadn't found the ford and got across and turned old Beaulieu's flank for you. You know you didn't dare give the order to charge the bridge until you saw us on the other side. Consequently, I say that whoever found that ford won the battle of Lodi. Well, who found it? I was the first man to cross; and I know. It was my horse that found it. [*With conviction, as he rises from the couch*] That horse is the true conqueror of the Austrians.

NAPOLEON [*passionately*] You idiot! I'll have you shot for losing those despatches. I'll have you blown from the mouth of a cannon: nothing less could make any impression on you. [*Baying at him*] Do you hear? Do you understand?

A French officer enters unobserved, carrying his sheathed sabre in his hand.

LIEUTENANT [*unabashed*] If I don't capture him, General. Remember the if.

NAPOLEON. If! ! Ass! there is no such man.

THE OFFICER [*suddenly stepping between them and speaking in the unmistakeable voice of the Strange Lady*] Lieutenant: I am your prisoner. [*She offers him her sabre*]

Napoleon gazes at her for a moment thunderstruck; then seizes her by the wrist and drags her roughly to him, looking closely and fiercely at her to satisfy himself as to her identity: for it now begins to darken rapidly into night, the red glow over the vineyard giving way to clear starlight.

NAPOLÉON Pah! [*He flings her hand away with an exclamation of disgust, and turns his back on them with his hand in his breast, his brow lowering, and his toes twitching*]

LIEUTENANT [*triumphantly, taking the sabre*] No such man! eh, General? [*To the Lady*] I say wheres my horse?

LADY Safe at Boighetto, waiting for you, Lieutenant

NAPOLÉON [*turning on them*] Where are the despatches?

LADY You would never guess They are in the most unlikely place in the world Did you meet my sister here, any of you?

LIEUTENANT Yes Very nice woman She's wonderfully like you, but of course she's better-looking

LADY [*mysteriously*] Well, do you know that she is a witch?

GIUSEPPE [*in terror, crossing himself*] Oh, no, no, no It is not safe to jest about such things I cannot have it in my house, excellency

LIEUTENANT Yes, drop it You're my prisoner, you know Of course I don't believe in any such rubbish, but still it's not a proper subject for joking

LADY But this is very serious My sister has bewitched the General [*Giuseppe and the lieutenant recoil from Napoleon*] General open your coat you will find the despatches in the breast of it [*She puts her hand quickly on his breast*] Yes there they are I can feel them Eh? [*She looks up into his face half coaxingly, half mockingly*] Will you allow me, General? [*She takes a button as if to unbutton his coat, and pauses for permission*]

NAPOLÉON [*inscrutably*] If you dare

LADY Thank you [*She opens his coat and takes out the despatches*] There! [*To Giuseppe, shewing him the despatches*] See!

GIUSEPPE [*flying to the outer door*] No, in heaven's name! They're bewitched

LADY [*turning to the lieutenant*] Here, Lieutenant you are not afraid of them

LIEUTENANT [*retreating*] Keep off [*Seizing the hilt of the sabre*] Keep off, I tell you

LADY [*to Napoleon*] They belong to you, General Take them

GIUSEPPE Dont touch them, excellency. Have nothing to do with them.

LIEUTENANT. Be careful, General. be careful.

GIUSEPPE Burn them And burn the witch too.

LADY [*to Napoleon*] Shall I burn them?

NAPOLEON [*thoughtfully*] Yes, burn them Giuseppe go and fetch a light.

GIUSEPPE [*trembling and stammering*] Do you mean go alone? in the dark! with a witch in the house?

NAPOLEON. Psha! Youre a poltroon. [*To the lieutenant*] Oblige me by going, Lieutenant

LIEUTENANT [*remonstrating*] Oh, I say, General! No, look here, you know nobody can say I'm a coward after Lodi! But to ask me to go into the dark by myself without a candle after such an awful conversation is a little too much. How would you like to do it yourself?

NAPOLEON [*irritably*] You refuse to obey my order?

LIEUTENANT [*resolutely*] Yes I do It's not reasonable. But I'll tell you what I'll do If Giuseppe goes, I'll go with him and protect him

NAPOLEON [*to Giuseppe*] There! will that satisfy you? Be off, both of you

GIUSEPPE [*humbly, his lips trembling*] W-willingly, your excellency [*He goes reluctantly towards the inner door*] Heaven protect me! [*To the lieutenant*] After you, Lieutenant

LIEUTENANT. Youd better go first. I dont know the way

GIUSEPPE You cant miss it. Besides [*imploringly, laying his hand on his sleeve*] I am only a poor innkeeper you are a man of family.

LIEUTENANT. Theres something in that Here you neednt be in such a fright Take my arm [*Giuseppe does so*] Thats the way. [*They go out, arm in arm*]

It is now starry night The lady throws the packet on the table and seats herself at her ease on the couch, enjoying the sensation of freedom from petticoats.

LADY Well, General Ive beaten you

NAPOLEON [*walking about*] You are guilty of indelicacy of

unwomanliness Is that costume proper?

LADY It seems to me much the same as yours

NAPOLEON Psha! I blush for you

LADY [*naïvely*] Yes soldiers blush so easily [*He growls and turns away She looks mischievously at him, balancing the despatches in her hand*] Wouldnt you like to read these before theyre burnt, General? You must be dying with curiosity Take a peep [*She throws the packet on the table, and turns her face away from it*] I wont look

NAPOLEON I have no curiosity whatever, madam But since you are evidently burning to read them, I give you leave to do so

LADY Oh, Ive read them already

NAPOLEON [*starting*] What!

LADY I read them the first thing after I rode away on that poor lieutenant's horse So you see I know whats in them, and you dont

NAPOLEON Excuse me I read them when I was out there in the vineyard ten minutes ago

LADY Oh! [*Jumping up*] Oh, General Ive not beaten you after all I do admire you so [*He laughs and pats her cheek*] This time, really and truly without shamming, I do you homage [*kissing his hand*]

NAPOLEON [*quickly withdrawing it*] Brr! Dont do that No more witchcraft

LADY I want to say something to you, only you would misunderstand it

NAPOLEON Need that stop you?

LADY Well, it is this I adore a man who is not afraid to be mean and selfish

NAPOLEON [*indignantly*] I am neither mean nor selfish

LADY Oh, you dont appreciate yourself Besides, I dont really mean meanness and selfishness

NAPOLEON Thank you I thought perhaps you did

LADY Well, of course I do But what I mean is a certain strong simplicity about you

NAPOLEON Thats better

LADY. You didnt want to read the letters, but you were curious about what was in them. So you went into the garden and read them when no one was looking, and then came back and pretended you hadnt. Thats the meanest thing I ever knew any man do; but it exactly fulfilled your purpose; and so you werent a bit afraid or ashamed to do it.

NAPOLEON [*abruptly*] Where did you pick up all these vulgar scruples? this [*with contemptuous emphasis*] conscience of yours? I took you for a lady: an aristocrat. Was your grandfather a shopkeeper, pray?

LADY. No he was an Englishman.

NAPOLEON. That accounts for it. The English are a nation of shopkeepers Now I understand why youve beaten me.

LADY Oh, I havnt beaten you. And I'm not English

NAPOLEON Yes you are English to the backbone. Listen to me I will explain the English to you

LADY [*eagerly*] Do. [*With a lively air of anticipating an intellectual treat, she sits down on the couch and composes herself to listen to him* Secure of his audience, he at once nerves himself for a performance He considers a little before he begins, so as to fix her attention by a moment of suspense His style is at first modelled on Talma's in Corneille's Cinna; but it is somewhat lost in the darkness, and Talma presently gives way to Napoleon, the voice coming through the gloom with startling intensity].

NAPOLEON There are three sorts of people in the world the low people, the middle people, and the high people The low people and the high people are alike in one thing they have no scruples, no morality. The low are beneath morality, the high above it I am not afraid of either of them, for the low are unscrupulous without knowledge, so that they make an idol of me, whilst the high are unscrupulous without purpose, so that they go down before my will Look you I shall go over all the mobs and all the courts of Europe as a plough goes over a field It is the middle people who are dangerous they have both knowledge and purpose. But they, too, have their weak point. They are full of

scruples chained hand and foot by their morality and respectability

LADY Then you will beat the English, for all shopkeepers are middle people

NAPOLEON No, because the English are a race apart No Englishman is too low to have scruples no Englishman is high enough to be free from their tyranny But every Englishman is born with a certain miraculous power that makes him master of the world When he wants a thing, he never tells himself that he wants it He waits patiently until there comes into his mind, no one knows how, a burning conviction that it is his moral and religious duty to conquer those who possess the thing he wants Then he becomes irresistible Like the aristocrat, he does what pleases him and grabs what he covets like the shopkeeper, he pursues his purpose with the industry and steadfastness that come from strong religious conviction and deep sense of moral responsibility He is never at a loss for an effective moral attitude As the great champion of freedom and national independence, he conquers and annexes half the world, and calls it Colonization When he wants a new market for his adulterated Manchester goods, he sends a missionary to teach the natives the Gospel of Peace The natives kill the missionary he flies to arms in defence of Christianity, fights for it, conquers for it, and takes the market as a reward from heaven In defence of his island shores, he puts a chaplain on board his ship, nails a flag with a cross on it to his top-gallant mast, and sails to the ends of the earth, sinking, burning, and destroying all who dispute the empire of the seas with him He boasts that a slave is free the moment his foot touches British soil, and he sells the children of his poor at six years of age to work under the lash in his factories for sixteen hours a day He makes two revolutions, and then declares war on our one in the name of law and order There is nothing so bad or so good that you will not find Englishmen doing it, but you will never find an Englishman in the wrong He does everything on

principle. He fights you on patriotic principles, he robs you on business principles; he enslaves you on imperial principles, he bullies you on manly principles; he supports his king on royal principles and cuts off his king's head on republican principles. His watchword is always Duty, and he never forgets that the nation which lets its duty get on the opposite side to its interest is lost. He –

LADY. W-w-w-w-w-wh! Do stop a moment I want to know how you make me out to be English at this rate

NAPOLEON [*dropping his rhetorical style*] It's plain enough. You wanted some letters that belonged to me You have spent the morning in stealing them· yes, stealing them, by highway robbery And you have spent the afternoon in putting me in the wrong about them in assuming that it was *I* who wanted to steal your letters in explaining that it all came about through my meanness and selfishness, and your goodness, your devotion, your self-sacrifice. Thats English

LADY Nonsense! I am sure I am not a bit English The English are a very stupid people.

NAPOLEON. Yes, too stupid sometimes to know when theyre beaten But I grant that your brains are not English You see, though your grandfather was an Englishman, your grandmother was – what? A Frenchwoman?

LADY Oh no An Irishwoman.

NAPOLEON [*quickly*] Irish! [*Thoughtfully*] Yes I forgot the Irish An English army led by an Irish general that might be a match for a French army led by an Italian general. [*He pauses, and adds, half jestingly, half moodily*] At all events, you have beaten me, and what beats a man first will beat him last [*He goes meditatively into the moonlit vineyard and looks up*]

She steals out after him She ventures to rest her hand on his shoulder, overcome by the beauty of the night and emboldened by its obscurity

LADY [*softly*] What are you looking at?

NAPOLEON [*pointing up*] My star

LADY. You believe in that?

NAPOLEON I do

They look at it for a moment, she leaning a little on his shoulder
LADY Do you know that the English say that a man's star is not complete without a woman's garter?

NAPOLEON [*scandalized abruptly shaking her off and coming back into the room*] Pah! The hypocrites! If the French said that, how they would hold up their hands in pious horror! [*He goes to the inner door and holds it open, shouting*] Hallo! Giuseppe! Wheres that light, man? [*He comes between the table and the sideboard, and moves the second chair to the table, beside his own*] We have still to burn the letter [*He takes up the packet*]

Giuseppe comes back, pale and still trembling, carrying in one hand a branched candlestick with a couple of candles alight, and a broad snuffers tray in the other

GIUSEPPE [*piteously, as he places the light on the table*] Excellency what were you looking up at just now? Out there! [*He points across his shoulder to the vineyard, but is afraid to look round*]

NAPOLEON [*unfolding the packet*] What is that to you?

GIUSEPPE Because the witch is gone vanished, and no one saw her go out

LADY [*coming behind him from the vineyard*] We were watching her riding up to the moon on your broomstick, Giuseppe You will never see her again

GIUSEPPE Gesu Maria! [*He crosses himself and hurries out*]

NAPOLEON [*throwing down the letters in a heap on the table*] Now! [*He sits down at the table in the chair which he has just placed*]

LADY Yes, but you know you have THE letter in your pocket [*He smiles, takes a letter from his pocket, and tosses it on top of the heap She holds it up and looks at him, saying*] About Cæsar's wife

NAPOLEON Cæsar's wife is above suspicion Burn it

LADY [*taking up the snuffers and holding the letter to the candle flame with it*] I wonder would Cæsar's wife be above suspicion if she saw us here together!

NAPOLEON [*echoing her, with his elbows on the table and his cheeks on his hands, looking at the letter*] I wonder!

THE MAN OF DESTINY

The Strange Lady puts the letter down alight on the snuffers tray, and sits down beside Napoleon, in the same attitude, elbows on table, cheeks on hands, watching it burn. When it is burnt, they simultaneously turn their eyes and look at one another. The curtain steals down and hides them

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

1897

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

ACT I

In a dentist's operating room on a fine August morning in 1896 It is the best sitting room of a furnished lodging in a terrace on the sea front at a watering place on the coast of Torbay in Devon The operating chair, with a gas pump and cylinder beside it, is half way between the centre of the room and one of the corners If you could look into the room through the window facing the chair, you would see the fireplace in the middle of the wall opposite you, with the door beside it to your left, a dental surgeon's diploma in a frame above the mantelshelf, an easy chair on the hearth, and a neat stool and bench, with vice, tools, and a mortar and pestle, in a corner to the right In the wall on your left is a broad window looking on the sea Beneath it a writing table with a blotter and a diary on it, and a chair Also a sofa, farther along A cabinet of instruments is handy to the operating chair The furniture, carpet, and wallpaper are those of a mid-Victorian drawing room, formally bright and festive, not for everyday use

Two persons just now occupy the room One of them, a very pretty woman in miniature, her tiny figure dressed with the daintiest gaiety, is hardly eighteen yet This darling little creature clearly does not belong to the room, or even to the country, for her complexion, though very delicate, has been burnt biscuit colour by some warmer sun than England's She has a glass of water in her hand, and a rapidly clearing cloud of Spartan endurance on her small firm set mouth and quaintly squared eyebrows

The dentist, contemplating her with the self-satisfaction of a successful operator, is a young man of thirty or thereabouts He does not give the impression of being much of a workman the professional manner of the newly set-up dentist in search of patients is underlain by a thoughtless pleasantry which betrays the young gentleman, still unsettled and in search of amusing adventures He is not without gravity of demeanor, but the strained nostrils stamp it as the gravity of the humorist His eyes are clear, alert, of sceptically moderate size, and yet a little rash, his forehead is an excellent one, with plenty of room behind it, his nose and chin are cavalierly handsome On the whole, an

attractive noticeable beginner, of whose prospects a man of business might form a tolerably favorable estimate.

THE YOUNG LADY [*handing him the glass*] Thank you. [*In spite of the biscuit complexion she has not the slightest foreign accent*].

THE DENTIST [*putting it down on the ledge of his cabinet of instruments*] That was my first tooth.

THE YOUNG LADY [*aghast*] Your first! Do you mean to say that you began practising on me?

THE DENTIST. Every dentist has to begin with somebody.

THE YOUNG LADY. Yes. somebody in a hospital, not people who pay.

THE DENTIST [*laughing*] Oh, the hospital doesn't count. I only meant my first tooth in private practice. Why didn't you let me give you gas?

THE YOUNG LADY. Because you said it would be five shillings extra.

THE DENTIST [*shocked*] Oh, don't say that. It makes me feel as if I had hurt you for the sake of five shillings.

THE YOUNG LADY [*with cool insolence*] Well, so you have. [*She gets up*] Why shouldn't you? it's your business to hurt people. [*It amuses him to be treated in this fashion. he chuckles secretly as he proceeds to clean and replace his instruments. She shakes her dress into order looks inquisitively about her; and goes to the broad window*]. You have a good view of the sea from your rooms! Are they expensive?

THE DENTIST. Yes.

THE YOUNG LADY. You don't own the whole house, do you?

THE DENTIST. No.

THE YOUNG LADY. I thought not. [*Tilting the chair which stands at the writing-table and looking critically at it as she spins it round on one leg*] Your furniture isn't quite the latest thing, is it?

THE DENTIST. It's my landlord's.

THE YOUNG LADY. Does he own that toothache chair [*pointing to the operating chair*].

THE DENTIST. No. I have that on the hire-purchase system.

THE YOUNG LADY [*disparagingly*] I thought so. [*Looking*

about in search of further conclusions] I suppose you havnt been here long?

THE DENTIST Six weeks Is there anything else you would like to know?

THE YOUNG LADY [*the hint quite lost on her*] Any family?

THE DENTIST I am not married

THE YOUNG LADY Of course not anybody can see that I meant sisters and mother and that sort of thing

THE DENTIST Not on the premises

THE YOUNG LADY Hm! If youve been here six weeks, and mine was your first tooth, the practice cant be very large, can it?

THE DENTIST Not as yet [*He shuts the cabinet, having tidied up everything*]

THE YOUNG LADY Well, good luck! [*She takes out her purse*] Five shillings, you said it would be?

THE DENTIST Five shillings

THE YOUNG LADY [*producing a crown piece*] Do you charge five shillings for everything?

THE DENTIST Yes

THE YOUNG LADY Why?

THE DENTIST It's my system I'm whats called a five shilling dentist

THE YOUNG LADY How nice! Well, here! [*holding up the crown piece*] a nice new five-shilling piece! your first fee! Make a hole in it with the thing you drill people's teeth with, and wear it on your watch-chain

THE DENTIST Thank you

THE PARLORMAID [*appearing at the door*] The young lady's brother, sir

A handsome man in miniature, obviously the young lady's twin, comes in eagerly He wears a suit of terra cotta cashmere, the elegantly cut frock coat lined in brown silk, and carries in his hand a brown tall hat and tan gloves to match He has his sister's delicate biscuit complexion, and is built on the same scale, but he is elastic and strong in muscle, decisive in movement, unexpectedly deep-toned and trenchant in speech, and with perfect manners and a finished

personal style which might be envied by a man twice his age Suavity and self-possession are points of honor with him, and though this, rightly considered, is only a mode of boyish self-consciousness, its effect is none the less staggering to his elders, and would be quite insufferable in a less prepossessing youth He is promptitude itself, and has a question ready the moment he enters.

THE YOUNG GENTLEMAN Am I in time?

THE YOUNG LADY No. it's all over.

THE YOUNG GENTLEMAN. Did you howl?

THE YOUNG LADY. Oh, something awful. Mr Valentine· this is my brother Phil. Phil this is Mr Valentine, our new dentist [*Valentine and Phil bow to one another She proceeds, all in one breath*] He's only been here six weeks and he's a bachelor the house isnt his and the furniture is the landlord's but the professional plant is hired he got my tooth out beautifully at the first go and he and I are great friends.

PHILIP Been asking a lot of questions?

THE YOUNG LADY [*as if incapable of doing such a thing*] Oh no

PHILIP Glad to hear it. [*To Valentine*] So good of you not to mind us, Mr Valentine The fact is, weve never been in England before, and our mother tells us that the people here simply wont stand us Come and lunch with us

Valentine, bewildered by the leaps and bounds with which their acquaintanceship is proceeding, gasps, but has no time to reply, as the conversation of the twins is swift and continuous.

THE YOUNG LADY. Oh, do, Mr Valentine

PHILIP At the Marine Hotel· half past one

THE YOUNG LADY We shall be able to tell mamma that a respectable Englishman has promised to lunch with us

PHILIP Say no more, Mr Valentine youll come

VALENTINE Say no more! I havnt said anything May I ask whom I have the pleasure of entertaining? It's really quite impossible for me to lunch at the Marine Hotel with two perfect strangers.

THE YOUNG LADY [*flippantly*] Ooooh! what bosh! One patient in six weeks! What difference does it make to you?

PHILIP [*maturely*] No, Dolly my knowledge of human nature

confirms Mr Valentine's judgment He is right Let me introduce Miss Dorothy Clandon, commonly called Dolly [*Valentine bows to Dolly She nods to him*] I'm Philip Clandon We're from Madeira, but perfectly respectable so far

VALENTINE Clandon! Are you related to -

DOLLY [*unexpectedly crying out in despair*] Yes we are

VALENTINE [*astonished*] I beg your pardon?

DOLLY Oh, we are, we are It's all over, Phil they know all about us in England [*To Valentine*] Oh, you cant think how maddening it is to be related to a celebrated person, and never be valued anywhere for our own sakes

VALENTINE But excuse me the gentleman I was thinking of is not celebrated

DOLLY AND PHILIP [*staring at him*] Gentleman!

VALENTINE Yes I was going to ask whether you were by any chance a daughter of Mr Densmore Clandon of Newbury Hall

DOLLY [*vacantly*] No

PHILIP Well, come, Dolly how do you know youre not?

DOLLY [*cheered*] Oh, I forgot Of course Perhaps I am

VALENTINE Dont you know?

PHILIP Not in the least

DOLLY It's a wise child -

PHILIP [*cutting her short*] Sh! [*Valentine starts nervously, for the sound made by Phil, though but momentary, is like cutting a sheet of silk in two with a flash of lightning It is the result of long practice in checking Dolly's indiscretions*] The fact is, Mr Valentine, we are the children of the celebrated Mrs Lanfrey Clandon, an authoress of great repute - in Madeira No household is complete without her works We came to England to get away from them They are called the Twentieth Century Treatises

Y Twentieth Century Cooking

P Twentieth Century Creeds

Twentieth Century Clothing

Twentieth Century Conduct

Twentieth Century Children

PHILIP Twentieth Century Parents.

DOLLY Cloth limp, half a dollar.

PHILIP. Or mounted on linen for hard family use, two dollars. No family should be without them. Read them, Mr Valentine they'll improve your mind.

DOLLY But not til weve gone, please.

PHILIP. Quite so we prefer people with unimproved minds Our own minds have successfully resisted all our mother's efforts to improve them.

VALENTINE [*dubiously*] Hm!

DOLLY [*echoing him inquiringly*] Hm? Phil. he prefers people whose minds are improved

PHILIP. In that case we shall have to introduce him to the other member of the family the Woman of the Twentieth Century: our sister Gloria!

DOLLY [*dithyrambically*] Nature's masterpiece!

PHILIP. Learning's daughter!

DOLLY Madeira's pride!

PHILIP Beauty's paragon!

DOLLY [*suddenly descending to prose*] Bosh! No complexion.

VALENTINE [*desperately*] May I have a word?

PHILIP [*politely*] Excuse us Go ahead.

DOLLY [*very nicely*] So sorry.

VALENTINE [*attempting to take them paternally*] I really must give a hint to you young people –

DOLLY [*breaking out again*] Oh come! I like that. How old are you?

PHILIP. Over thirty

DOLLY He's not.

PHILIP [*confidently*] He is.

DOLLY [*emphatically*] Twenty-seven.

PHILIP [*imperturbably*] Thirty-three.

DOLLY. Stuff

PHILIP [*to Valentine*] I appeal to you, Mr Valentine.

VALENTINE [*remonstrating*] Well, really – [*resigning himself*] Thirty-one

PHILIP [*to Dolly*] You were wrong.

DOLLY So were you

PHILIP [*suddenly conscientious*] We're forgetting our manners,
Dolly

DOLLY [*remorseful*] Yes, so we are

PHILIP [*apologetic*] We interrupted you, Mr Valentine

DOLLY You were going to improve our minds, I think

VALENTINE The fact is, your -

PHILIP [*anticipating him*] Our manners?

DOLLY Our appearance?

VALENTINE [*ad misericordiam*] Oh do let me speak

DOLLY The old story We talk too much

PHILIP We do Shut up, both [*He seats himself on the arm of
the operating chair*]

DOLLY Mum! [*She sits down in the writing-table chair, and closes
her lips with the tips of her fingers*]

VALENTINE Thank you [*He brings the stool from the bench
in the corner, places it between them, and sits down with a judicial
air They attend to him with extreme gravity He addresses himself
first to Dolly*] Now may I ask, to begin with, have you ever
been in an English seaside resort before? [*She shakes her head
slowly and solemnly He turns to Phil, who shakes his head quickly
and expressively*] I thought so Well, Mr Clandon, our
acquaintance has been short, but it has been voluble, and
I have gathered enough to convince me that you are neither
of you capable of conceiving what life in an English seaside
resort is Believe me, it's not a question of manners and
appearance In those respects we enjoy a freedom unknown
in Madeira [*Dolly shakes her head vehemently*] Oh yes, I
assure you Lord de Cresci's sister bicycles in knicker-
bockers, and the rector's wife advocates dress reform and
wears hygienic boots [*Dolly furtively looks at her own shoe
Valentine catches her in the act, and deftly adds*] No, thats not
the sort of boot I mean [*Dolly's shoe vanishes*] We dont
bother much about dress and manners in England, because,
as a nation, we dont dress well and weve no manners
But - and now will you excuse my frankness? [*They nod*]
Thank you Well, in a seaside resort theres one thing you

must have before anybody can afford to be seen going about with you, and thats a father, alive or dead. Am I to infer that you have omitted that indispensable part of your social equipment? [*They confirm him by melancholy nods*]. Then I'm sorry to say that if you are going to stay here for any length of time, it will be impossible for me to accept your kind invitation to lunch [*He rises with an air of finality, and replaces the stool by the bench*].

PHILIP [*rising with grave politeness*] Come, Dolly. [*He gives her his arm*]

DOLLY Good morning [*They go together to the door with perfect dignity*]

VALENTINE [*overwhelmed with remorse*] Oh stop! stop! [*They halt and turn, arm in arm*]. You make me feel a perfect beast

DOLLY Thats your conscience not us

VALENTINE [*energetically, throwing off all pretence of a professional manner*] My conscience! My conscience has been my ruin Listen to me Twice before I have set up as a respectable medical practitioner in various parts of England. On both occasions I acted conscientiously, and told my patients the brute truth instead of what they wanted to be told. Result, ruin Now Ive set up as a dentist, a five shilling dentist, and Ive done with conscience for ever This is my last chance. I spent my last sovereign on moving in, and I havnt paid a shilling of rent yet I'm eating and drinking on credit; my landlord is as rich as a Jew and as hard as nails; and Ive made five shillings in six weeks If I swerve by a hair's breadth from the straight line of the most rigid respectability, I'm done for Under such circumstances is it fair to ask me to lunch with you when you dont know your own father?

DOLLY After all, our grandfather is a canon of Lincoln Cathedral

VALENTINE [*like a castaway mariner who sees a sail on the horizon*] What! Have you a grandfather?

DOLLY Only one

VALENTINE My dear good young friends, why on earth didnt you tell me that before? A canon of Lincoln! That makes it all right, of course Just excuse me while I change my coat [*He reaches the door in a bound and vanishes*]

Dolly and Phil stare after him, and then at one another Missing their audience, they discard their style at once

PHILIP [*throwing away Dolly's arm and coming ill-humoredly towards the operating chair*] That wretched bankrupt ivory snatcher makes a compliment of allowing us to stand him a lunch probably the first square meal he has had for months [*He gives the chair a kick, as if it were Valentine*]

DOLLY It's too beastly I wont stand it any longer, Phil Here in Engl and everybody asks whether you have a father the very first thing

PHILIP I wont stand it either Mamma must tell us who he was

DOLLY Or who he is He may be alive

PHILIP I hope not No man alive shall father me

DOLLY He might have a lot of money, though

PHILIP I doubt it My knowledge of human nature leads me to believe that if he had a lot of money he wouldnt have got rid of his affectionate family so easily Anyhow, let's look at the bright side of things Depend on it, he's dead

*He goes to the hearth and stands with his back to the fireplace
The parlormaid appears*

THE PARLORMAID Two ladies for you, miss Your mother and sister, miss, I think

Mrs Clandon and Gloria come in Mrs Clandon is a veteran of the Old Guard of the Women's Rights movement which had for its Bible John Stuart Mill's treatise on The Subjection of Women She has never made herself ugly or ridiculous by affecting masculine waistcoats, collars, and watchchains, like some of her old comrades who had more aggressiveness than taste, and she is too militant an Agnostic to care to be mistaken for a Quaker She therefore dresses in as businesslike a way as she can without making a guy of herself, ruling out all attempt at sex attraction and imposing respect on

frivolous mankind and fashionable womankind. She belongs to the forefront of her own period (say 1860-80) in a jealously assertive attitude of character and intellect, and in being a woman of cultivated interests rather than passionately developed personal affections. Her voice and ways are entirely kindly and humane; and she lends herself conscientiously to the occasional demonstrations of fondness by which her children mark their esteem for her; but displays of personal sentiment secretly embarrass her, passion in her is humanitarian rather than human, she feels strongly about social questions and principles, not about persons. Only, one observes that this reasonableness and intense personal privacy, which leaves her relations with Gloria and Phil much as they might be between her and the children of any other woman, breaks down in the case of Dolly. Though almost every word she addresses to her is necessarily in the nature of a remonstrance for some breach of decorum, the tenderness in her voice is unmistakeable; and it is not surprising that years of such remonstrance have left Dolly hopelessly spoiled.

Gloria, who is hardly past twenty, is a much more formidable person than her mother. She is the incarnation of haughty high-mindedness, raging with the impatience of a mettlesome domitative character paralyzed by the inexperience of her youth, and unwillingly disciplined by the constant danger of ridicule from her irreverent juniors. Unlike her mother, she is all passion, and the conflict of her passion with her obstinate pride and intense fastidiousness results in a freezing coldness of manner. In an ugly woman all this would be repulsive, but Gloria is attractive. A dangerous girl, one would say, if the moral passions were not also marked, and even nobly marked, in a fine brow. Her tailormade skirt-and-jacket dress, of saffron brown cloth, seems conventional when her back is turned, but it displays in front a blouse of sea-green silk which scatters its conventionality with one stroke, and sets her apart as effectually as the twins from the ordinary run of fashionable seaside humanity.

Mrs Glandon comes a little way into the room looking round to see who is present. Gloria, who studiously avoids encouraging the twins by betraying any interest in them, wanders to the window and looks out to sea with her thoughts far away. The parlormaid, instead of withdrawing, shuts the door and waits at it.

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

MRS CLANDON Well, children? How is the toothache, Dolly?

DOLLY Cured, thank Heaven I've had it out [*She sits down on the step of the operating chair*]

Mrs Clandon takes the writing-table chair

PHILIP [*striking in gravely from the hearth*] And the dentist, a first rate professional man of the highest standing, is coming to lunch with us

MRS CLANDON [*looking round apprehensively at the servant*] Phil!

THE PARLORMAID Beg pardon, Maam I'm waiting for Mr Valentine I have a message for him

DOLLY Who from?

MRS CLANDON [*shocked*] Dolly!

Dolly catches her lips suppressively with her finger tips

THE PARLORMAID Only the landlord, maam

Valentine, in a blue serge suit, with a straw hat in his hand, comes back in high spirits, out of breath with the haste he has made Gloria turns from the window and studies him with chilling attention

PHILIP Let me introduce you, Mr Valentine My mother, Mrs Lanfrey Clandon [*Mrs Clandon bows Valentine bows, self-possessed and quite equal to the occasion*] My sister Gloria [*Gloria bows with cold dignity and sits down on the sofa*]

Valentine falls abjectly in love at first sight He fingers his hat nervously, and makes her a sneaking bow

MRS CLANDON I understand that we are to have the pleasure of seeing you at luncheon today, Mr Valentine

VALENTINE Thank you - er - if you dont mind - I mean if you will be so kind - [*to the parlormaid, testily*] What is it?

THE PARLORMAID The landlord, sir, wishes to speak to you before you go out

VALENTINE Oh, tell him I have four patients here [*The Clandons look surprised, except Phil, who is unperturbed*] If he wouldnt mind waiting just two minutes, I - I'll slip down and see him for a moment [*Throwing himself confidentially on her sense of position*] Say I'm busy, but that I want to see him

THE PARLORMAID [*reassuringly*] Yes, sir [*She goes*]

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

MRS CLANDON [*touching her shoulder affectionately, softened even by a gibe from her*] My dear Dolly: if you only knew how glad I am that it is nothing but a joke to you, though it is such bitter earnest to me. [*More resolutely, turning to Phil*] Phil: I never ask you questions about your private concerns You are not going to question me, are you?

PHILIP. I think it due to ourselves to say that the question we wanted to ask is as much our business as yours.

DOLLY Besides, it cant be good to keep a lot of questions bottled up inside you. You did it, mamma; but see how awfully it's broken out again in me.

MRS CLANDON. I see you want to ask your question. Ask it

DOLLY AND PHILIP [*beginning simultaneously*] Who - [*They stop*].

PHILIP. Now look here, Dolly: am I going to conduct this business or are you?

DOLLY. You.

PHILIP. Then hold your mouth. [*Dolly does so, literally*]. The question is a simple one When the ivory snatcher -

MRS CLANDON [*remonstrating*] Phil!

PHILIP. Dentist is an ugly word. The man of ivory and gold asked us whether we were the children of Mr Densmore Clandon of Newbury Hall. In pursuance of the precepts in your treatise on Twentieth Century Conduct, and your repeated personal exhortations to us to curtail the number of unnecessary lies we tell, we replied truthfully that we didnt know

DOLLY. Neither did we.

PHILIP. Sh! The result was that the gum architect made considerable difficulties about accepting our invitation to lunch, although I doubt if he has had anything but tea and bread and butter for a fortnight past Now my knowledge of human nature leads me to believe that we had a father, and that you probably know who he was

MRS CLANDON [*her agitation returning*] Stop, Phil. Your father is nothing to you, nor to me. [*Vehemently*] That is enough
The twins are silenced, but not satisfied. Their faces fall. But

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

Gloria, who has been following the altercation attentively, suddenly intervenes

GLORIA [*advancing*] Mother we have a right to know

MRS CLANDON [*rising and facing her*] Gloria! 'We'! Who is 'we'?

GLORIA [*steadfastly*] We three [*Her tone is unmistakeable she is putting her strength against her mother's for the first time The twins instantly go over to the enemy*]

MRS CLANDON [*wounded*] In your mouth 'we' used to mean you and I, Gloria

PHILIP [*rising decisively and putting away the stool*] We're hurting you let's drop it We didnt think youd mind I dont want to know

DOLLY [*coming off the table*] I'm sure I dont Oh, dont look like that, mamma [*She looks angrily at Gloria and flings her arms round her mother's neck*]

MRS CLANDON Thank you, my dear Thanks, Phil [*She detaches Dolly gently and sits down again*]

GLORIA [*inexorably*] We have a right to know, mother

MRS CLANDON [*indignantly*] Ah! You insist

GLORIA Do you intend that we shall never know?

DOLLY Oh Gloria, dont It's barbarous

GLORIA [*with quiet scorn*] What is the use of being weak? You see what has happened with this gentleman here, mother The same thing has happened to me

MRS CLANDON } [*all*] {What do you mean?

DOLLY } [*together*] {Oh, tell us!

PHILIP } {What happened to you?

GLORIA Oh, nothing of any consequence [*She turns away from them and strolls up to the easy chair at the fireplace, where she sits down, almost with her back to them As they wait expectantly, she adds, over her shoulder, with studied indifference*] On board the steamer, the first officer did me the honor to propose to me

DOLLY No it was to me

MRS CLANDON The first officer! Are you serious, Gloria? What did you say to him? [*Correcting herself*] Excuse me I have no right to ask that

GLORIA. The answer is pretty obvious. A woman who does not know who her father was cannot accept such an offer.

MRS CLANDON. Surely you did not want to accept it!

GLORIA [*turning a little and raising her voice*] No; but suppose I had wanted to!

PHILIP. Did that difficulty strike you, Dolly?

DOLLY. No. I accepted him

GLORIA	} [<i>all crying out together</i>]	{ Accepted him!	
MRS CLANDON			{ Dolly!
PHILIP			

DOLLY [*navely*] He did look such a fool!

MRS CLANDON But why did you do such a thing, Dolly?

DOLLY For fun, I suppose. He had to measure my finger for a ring. You'd have done the same thing yourself.

MRS CLANDON. No, Dolly, I would not. As a matter of fact the first officer did propose to me; and I told him to keep that sort of thing for women who were young enough to be amused by it. He appears to have acted on my advice. [*She rises and goes to the hearth*]. Gloria: I am sorry you think me weak; but I cannot tell you what you want. You are all too young.

PHILIP. This is rather a startling departure from Twentieth Century principles.

DOLLY [*quoting*] 'Answer all your children's questions, and answer them truthfully, as soon as they are old enough to ask them.' See Twentieth Century Motherhood -

PHILIP. Page one.

DOLLY. Chapter one.

PHILIP. Sentence one.

MRS CLANDON. My dears: I do not mean that you are too young to know. I mean that you are too young to be taken into my confidence. You are very bright children, all of you; but you are still very inexperienced and consequently sometimes very unsympathetic. There are experiences of mine that I cannot bear to speak of except to those who have gone through what I have gone through. I hope you will never be qualified for such confidences.

PHILIP Another grievance, Dolly!

DOLLY We're not sympathetic

GLORIA [*leaning forward in her chair and looking earnestly up at her mother*] Mother I did not mean to be unsympathetic

MRS CLANDON [*affectionately*] Of course not, dear I quite understand!

GLORIA [*rising*] But, mother -

MRS CLANDON [*drawing back a little*] Yes?

GLORIA [*obstinately*] It is nonsense to tell us that our father is nothing to us

MRS CLANDON [*provoked to sudden resolution*] Do you remember your father?

GLORIA [*meditatively, as if the recollection were a tender one*] I am not quite sure I think so

MRS CLANDON [*grimly*] You are not sure?

GLORIA No

MRS CLANDON [*with quiet force*] Gloria if I had ever struck you [*Gloria recoils Phil and Dolly are disagreeably shocked all three stare at her, revolted, as she continues mercilessly*] - struck you purposely, deliberately, with the intention of hurting you, with a whip bought for the purpose! would you remember that, do you think? [*Gloria utters an exclamation of indignant repulsion*] That would have been your last recollection of your father, Gloria, if I had not taken you away from him I have kept him out of your life keep him now out of mine by never mentioning him to me again

Gloria, with a shudder, covers her face with her hands until, hearing someone at the door, she recomposes herself Mrs Clandon sits down on the sofa Valentine returns

VALENTINE I hope I've not kept you waiting That landlord of mine is really an extraordinary old character

DOLLY [*eagerly*] Oh, tell us How long has he given you to pay?

MRS CLANDON [*distracted by her child's manners*] Dolly, Dolly, Dolly dear! You must not ask questions

DOLLY [*demurely*] So sorry You'll tell us, wont you, Mr Valentine

VALENTINE. He doesn't want his rent at all. He's broken his tooth on a Brazil nut, and he wants me to look at it and to lunch with him afterwards.

DOLLY. Then have him up and pull his tooth out at once; and we'll bring him to lunch too. Tell the maid to fetch him along [*She runs to the bell and rings it vigorously Then, with a sudden doubt, she turns to Valentine and adds*] I suppose he's respectable? really respectable?

VALENTINE. Perfectly. Not like me.

DOLLY. Honest Injun?

Mrs Clandon gasps faintly; but her powers of remonstrance are exhausted

VALENTINE. Honest Injun!

DOLLY. Then off with you and bring him up.

VALENTINE [*looking dubiously at Mrs Clandon*] I dare say he'd be delighted if — er — ?

MRS CLANDON [*rising and looking at her watch*] I shall be happy to see your friend at lunch if you can persuade him to come, but I can't wait to see him now: I have an appointment at the hotel at a quarter to one with an old friend whom I have not seen since I left England eighteen years ago. Will you excuse me?

VALENTINE. Certainly, Mrs Clandon.

GLORIA. Shall I come?

MRS CLANDON. No, dear. I want to be alone. [*She goes out, evidently still a good deal troubled*]

Valentine opens the door for her and follows her.

PHILIP [*significantly to Dolly*] Hmhm!

DOLLY [*significantly to Phil*] Ahah!

The parlormaid answers the bell.

DOLLY. Shew the old gentleman up.

THE PARLORMAID [*puzzled*] Madam?

DOLLY. The old gentleman with the toothache.

PHILIP. The landlord

THE PARLORMAID. Mr Crampton, sir?

PHILIP. Is his name Crampton?

DOLLY [*to Phil*] Sounds rheumaticky, doesn't it?

PHILIP Chalkstones, probably

DOLLY Shew Mr Crampstones up

THE PARLORMAID [*going out*] Mr Crampton, miss

DOLLY [*repeating it to herself like a lesson*] Crampton, Cramp-ton, Crampton, Crampton, Crampton [*She sits down studiously at the writing-table*] I must get that name right, or Heaven knows what I shall call him

GLORIA Phil can you believe such a horrible thing as that about our father? what mother said just now

PHILIP Oh, there are lots of people of that kind Old Chamico used to thrash his wife and daughters with a cart whip

DOLLY [*contemptuously*] Yes, a Portuguese!

PHILIP When you come to men who are brutes, there is much in common between the Portuguese and the English variety, Doll Trust my knowledge of human nature [*He resumes his position on the hearth-rug with an elderly and responsible air*]

GLORIA [*with angered remorse*] I dont think we shall ever play again at our old game of guessing what our father was to be like Dolly are you sorry for your father? the father with lots of money!

DOLLY Oh come! What about your father? the lonely old man with the tender aching heart! He's pretty well burst up, I think

PHILIP There can be no doubt that the governor is an exploded superstition [*Valentine is heard talking to somebody outside the door*] But hark! he comes

GLORIA [*nervously*] Who?

DOLLY Chalkstones

PHILIP Sh! Attention! [*They put on their best manners Phil adds in a lower voice to Gloria*] If he's good enough for the lunch, I'll nod to Dolly, and if she nods to you, invite him straight away

Valentine comes back with his landlord Mr Fergus Crampton is a man of about sixty, with an atrociously obstinate ill tempered grasping mouth, and a dogmatic voice There is no sign of straitened

means or commercial diffidence about him: he is well dressed, and would be classed at a guess as a prosperous master-manufacturer in a business inherited from an old family in the aristocracy of trade. His navy blue coat is not of the usual fashionable pattern. It is not exactly a pilot's coat; but it is cut that way, double breasted, and with stout buttons and broad lappels a coat for a shipyard rather than a counting house. He has taken a fancy to Valentine, who cares nothing for his crossness of grain, and treats him with a disrespectful humanity for which he is secretly grateful.

VALENTINE May I introduce? This is Mr Crampton: Miss Dorothy Clandon, Mr Philip Clandon, Miss Clandon. [*Crampton stands nervously bowing. They all bow*]. Sit down, Mr Crampton.

DOLLY [*pointing to the operating chair*] That is the most comfortable chair, Mr Ch – crampton

CRAMPTON. Thank you; but wont this young lady – [*indicating Gloria, who is close to the chair*]?

GLORIA. Thank you, Mr Crampton. we are just going.

VALENTINE [*bustling him across to the chair with good-humored peremptoriness*] Sit down, sit down. You're tired.

CRAMPTON. Well, perhaps, as I am considerably the oldest person present, I – [*he finishes the sentence by sitting down a little rheumatically in the operating chair. Meanwhile Phil, having studied him critically during his passage across the room, nods to Dolly, and Dolly nods to Gloria*].

GLORIA. Mr Crampton. we understand that we are preventing Mr Valentine from lunching with you by taking him away ourselves. My mother would be very glad indeed if you would come too.

CRAMPTON [*gratefully, after looking at her earnestly for a moment*] Thank you. I will come with pleasure.

GLORIA	} [<i>politely</i>]	{	Thank you very much – er –
DOLLY			So glad – er –
PHILIP			Delighted, I'm sure – er –

The conversation drops. Gloria and Dolly look at one another; then at Valentine and Phil. Valentine and Phil, unequal to the occasion, look away from them at one another, and are instantly so dis-

concerted by catching one another's eye, that they look back again and catch the eyes of Gloria and Dolly Thus, catching one another all round, they all look at nothing and are quite at a loss Crampton looks at them, waiting for them to begin The silence becomes unbearable
 DOLLY [*suddenly, to keep things going*] How old are you, Mr Crampton?

GLORIA [*hastily*] I am afraid we must be going, Mr Valentine
 It is understood, then, that we meet at half past one [*She makes for the door Phil goes with her Valentine retreats to the bell*]

VALENTINE Half past one [*He rings the bell*] Many thanks
 [*He follows Gloria and Phil to the door, and goes out with them*]

DOLLY [*who has meanwhile stolen across to Crampton*] Make him give you gas It's five shillings extra, but it's worth it

GRAMPTON [*amused*] Very well [*Looking more earnestly at her*] So you want to know my age, do you? I'm fifty seven

DOLLY [*with conviction*] You look it

GRAMPTON [*grimly*] I dare say I do

DOLLY What are you looking at me so hard for? Anything wrong? [*She feels whether her hat is right*]

GRAMPTON You're like somebody

DOLLY Who?

GRAMPTON Well, you have a curious look of my mother

DOLLY [*incredulously*] Your mother!'' Quite sure you dont mean your daughter?

GRAMPTON [*suddenly blackening with hate*] Yes I'm quite sure I dont mean my daughter

DOLLY [*sympathetically*] Tooth bad?

GRAMPTON No, no nothing A twinge of memory, Miss Clandon, not of toothache

DOLLY Have it out 'Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow' With gas, five shillings extra

GRAMPTON [*vindictively*] No, not a sorrow An injury that was done me once thats all I dont forget injuries and I dont wait to forget them [*His features settle into an implacable frown*]

DOLLY [*looking critically at him*] I dont think we shall like you

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

when you are brooding over your injuries.

PHILIP [*who has entered the room unobserved, and stolen behind her*]

My sister means well, Mr Crampton; but she is indiscreet.

Now Dolly outside! [*He takes her towards the door*].

DOLLY [*in a perfectly audible undertone*] He says he's only fifty seven and he thinks me the image of his mother and he hates his daughter and - [*She is interrupted by the return of Valentine*]

VALENTINE. Miss Clandon has gone on.

PHILIP. Dont forget half past one

DOLLY. Mind you leave Mr Crampton enough teeth to eat with. [*They go out*].

Valentine comes to his cabinet, and opens it.

CRAMPTON Thats a spoiled child, Mr Valentine Thats one of your modern products When I was her age, I had many a good hiding fresh in my memory to teach me manners

VALENTINE [*taking up his dental mirror and probe*] What did you think of her sister?

CRAMPTON You liked her better, eh?

VALENTINE [*rhapsodically*] She struck me as being - [*He checks himself, and adds, prosaically*] However, thats not business [*He assumes his professional tone*]. Open, please [*Crampton opens his mouth Valentine puts the mirror in, and examines his teeth*] Hm! Youvesmashed that one. What a pity to spoilsuch a splendid set of teeth! Why do you crack nuts with them? [*He withdraws the mirror, and comes forward to converse with his patient*].

CRAMPTON Ive always cracked nuts with them. what else are they for? [*Dogmatically*] The proper way to keep teeth good is to give them plenty of use on bones and nuts, and wash them every day with soap plain yellow soap.

VALENTINE. Soap! Why soap?

CRAMPTON I began using it as a boy because I was made to, and Ive used it ever since And Ive never had toothache in my life.

VALENTINE Dont you find it rather nasty?

CRAMPTON I found that most things that were good for me

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

were nasty But I was taught to put up with them, and made to put up with them I'm used to it now in fact I like the taste when the soap is really good

VALENTINE [*making a wry face in spite of himself*] You seem to have been very carefully educated, Mr Crampton

CRAMPTON [*grimly*] I wasn't spoiled, at all events

VALENTINE [*smiling a little to himself*] Are you quite sure?

CRAMPTON [*crustily*] What d'y' mean?

VALENTINE Well, your teeth are good, I admit But I've seen just as good in very self-indulgent mouths [*He goes to the cabinet and changes the probe for another one*]

CRAMPTON It's not the effect on the teeth it's the effect on the character

VALENTINE [*placably*] Oh, the character! I see [*He recommences operations*] A little wider, please Hm! Why do you bite so hard? you've broken the tooth worse than you broke the Brazil nut It will have to come out it's past saving [*He withdraws the probe and again comes to the side of the chair to converse*] Don't be alarmed you shan't feel anything I'll give you gas

CRAMPTON Rubbish, man I want none of your gas Out with it! People were taught to bear necessary pain in my day

VALENTINE Oh, if you like being hurt, all right I'll hurt you as much as you like, without any extra charge for the beneficial effect on your character

CRAMPTON [*rising and glaring at him*] Young man you owe me six weeks rent

VALENTINE I do

CRAMPTON Can you pay me?

VALENTINE No

CRAMPTON [*satisfied with his advantage*] I thought not [*He sits down again*] How soon d'y' think you'll be able to pay me if you have no better manners than to make game of your patients?

VALENTINE My good sir my patients havn't all formed their characters on kitchen soap

CRAMPTON [*suddenly gripping him by the arm as he turns away again to the cabinet*] So much the worse for them! I tell you you don't understand my character. If I could spare all my teeth, I'd make you pull them out one after another to shew you what a properly hardened man can go through with when he's made up his mind to it. [*He nods at Valentine to emphasize this declaration, and releases him*].

VALENTINE [*his careless pleasantry quite unruffled*] And you want to be more hardened, do you?

CRAMPTON. Yes

VALENTINE [*strolling away to the bell*] Well, you're quite hard enough for me already – as a landlord. [*Crampton receives this with a growl of grim humor. Valentine rings the bell, and remarks in a cheerful casual way, whilst waiting for it to be answered*] Why did you never get married, Mr Crampton? A wife and children would have taken some of the hardness out of you.

CRAMPTON [*with unexpected ferocity*] What the devil is that to you?

The parlormaid appears at the door.

VALENTINE [*politely*] Some warm water, please. [*She retires, and Valentine comes back to the cabinet, not at all put out by Crampton's rudeness, and carries on the conversation whilst he selects a forceps and places it ready to his hand with a gag and a tumbler*] You were asking me what the devil that was to me. Well, I have an idea of getting married myself.

CRAMPTON [*with grumbling irony*] Naturally, sir, naturally. When a young man has come to his last farthing, and is within twenty-four hours of having his furniture distrained upon by his landlord, he marries. I've noticed that before. Well, marry; and be miserable.

VALENTINE Oh come! what do you know about it?

CRAMPTON I'm not a bachelor.

VALENTINE Then there is a Mrs Crampton?

CRAMPTON [*wincing with a pang of resentment*] Yes damn her!

VALENTINE [*unperturbed*] Hm! A father, too, perhaps, as well as a husband, Mr Crampton?

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

CRAMPTON Three children

VALENTINE [*politely*] Damn them? eh?

CRAMPTON [*jealously*] No, sir the children are as much mine as hers

The parlormaid brings in a jug of hot water

VALENTINE Thank you [*She gives him the jug and goes out He brings it to the cabinet, continuing in the same idle strain*] I really should like to know your family, Mr Crampton [*He pours some hot water into the tumbler*]

CRAMPTON Sorry I cant introduce you, sir I'm happy to say that I dont know where they are, and dont care, so long as they keep out of my way [*Valentine, with a hitch of his eyebrows and shoulders, drops the forceps with a clink into the hot water*] You neednt warm that thing to use on me I'm not afraid of the cold steel [*Valentine stoops to arrange the gas pump and cylinder beside the chair*] Whats that heavy thing?

VALENTINE Oh, never mind Something to put my foot on, to get the necessary purchase for a good pull [*Crampton looks alarmed in spite of himself Valentine stands upright and places the glass with the forceps ready to his hand, chatting on with provoking indifference*] And so you advise me not to get married, Mr Crampton? [*He puts his foot on the lever by which the chair is raised and lowered*]

CRAMPTON [*irritably*] I advise you to get my tooth out and have done reminding me of my wife Come along, man [*He grips the arms of the chair and braces himself*]

VALENTINE What do you bet that I dont get that tooth out without your feeling it?

CRAMPTON Your six weeks rent, young man Dont you gammon me

VALENTINE [*jumping at the bet and sending him aloft vigorously*] Done! Are you ready?

Crampton, who has lost his grip of the chair in his alarm at its sudden ascent, folds his arms, sits stiffly upright, and prepares for the worst Valentine suddenly lets down the back of the chair to an obtuse angle

CRAMPTON [*clutching at the arms of the chair as he falls back*] P!

take care, man! I'm quite helpless in this po –

VALENTINE [*deftly stopping him with the gag, and snatching up the mouthpiece of the gas machine*] You'll be more helpless presently.

He presses the mouthpiece over Crampton's mouth and nose, leaning over his chest so as to hold his head and shoulders well down on the chair. Crampton makes an inarticulate sound in the mouthpiece and tries to lay hands on Valentine, whom he supposes to be in front of him. After a moment his arms wave aimlessly, then subside and drop. He is quite insensible. Valentine throws aside the mouthpiece quickly; picks the forceps adroitly from the glass; and –.

ACT II

On the terrace at the Marine Hotel It is a square flagged platform, glaring in the sun, and fenced on the seaward edge by a parapet The head waiter, busy laying napkins on a luncheon table with his back to the sea, has the hotel on his right, and on his left, in the corner nearest the sea, a flight of steps leading down to the beach When he looks down the terrace in front of him he sees, a little to his left, a middle aged gentleman sitting on a chair of iron laths at a little iron table with a bowl of lump sugar on it, reading an ultra-Conservative newspaper, with his umbrella up to defend him from the sun, which, in August and at less than an hour after noon, is toasting his protended insteps At the hotel side of the terrace, there is a garden seat of the ordinary esplanade pattern Access to the hotel for visitors is by an entrance in the middle of its façade Nearer the parapet there lurks a way to the kitchen, masked by a little trellis porch The table at which the waiter is occupied is a long one, set across the terrace with covers and chairs for five, two at each side and one at the end next the hotel Against the parapet another table is prepared as a buffet to serve from

The waiter is a remarkable person in his way A silky old man, white haired and delicate looking, but so cheerful and contented that in his encouraging presence ambition stands rebuked as vulgarity, and imagination as treason to the abounding sufficiency and interest of the actual He has a certain expression peculiar to men who are pre-eminent in their callings, and who, whilst aware of the vanity of success, are untouched by envy

The gentleman at the iron table is not dressed for the seaside He wears his London frock coat and gloves, and his tall silk hat is on the table beside the sugarbowl The excellent condition and quality of these garments and the gold-rimmed folding spectacles through which he is reading, testify to his respectability He is about fifty, clean-shaven and close-cropped, with the corners of his mouth turned down purposely, as if he suspected them of wanting to turn up, and was determined not to let them have their way He keeps his brow resolutely wide open, as if, again, he had resolved in his youth to be truthful, magnanimous, and incorruptible, but had never succeeded in making that habit of mind automatic and unconscious Still, he is by no means to be laughed at

There is no sign of stupidity or infirmity of will about him· on the contrary, he would pass anywhere at sight as a man of more than average professional capacity and responsibility Just at present he is enjoying the weather and the sea too much to be out of patience; but he has exhausted all the news in his paper, and is at present reduced to the advertisements, which are not sufficiently succulent to induce him to persevere with them.

THE GENTLEMAN [*yawning and giving up the paper as a bad job*]
Waiter!

WAITER. Sir? [*coming to him*]

THE GENTLEMAN Are you quite sure Mrs Clandon is coming back before lunch?

WAITER Quite sure, sir She expects you at a quarter to one, sir. [*The gentleman, soothed at once by the waiter's voice, looks at him with a lazy smile It is a quiet voice, with a gentle melody in it that gives sympathetic interest to his most commonplace remark, and he speaks with the sweetest propriety, neither dropping his arches nor misplacing them, nor committing any other vulgarity He looks at his watch as he continues*] Not that yet, sir, is it? 12 43, sir. Only two minutes more to wait, sir. Nice morning, sir!

THE GENTLEMAN Yes· very fresh after London.

WAITER Yes, sir· so all our visitors say, sir. Very nice family, Mrs Clandon's, sir

THE GENTLEMAN. You like them, do you?

WAITER Yes, sir. They have a free way with them that is very taking, sir, very taking indeed: especially the young lady and gentleman

THE GENTLEMAN. Miss Dorothea and Mr Philip, I suppose

WAITER Yes, sir The young lady, in giving an order, or the like of that, will say, 'Remember, William· we came to this hotel on your account, having heard what a perfect waiter you are ' The young gentleman will tell me that I remind him strongly of his father [*the gentleman starts at this*] and that he expects me to act by him as such. [*With a soothing sunny cadence*] Oh very pleasant sir, very affable and pleasant indeed!

THE GENTLEMAN You like his father! [*He laughs at the notion*]

WAITER Oh, sir, we must not take what they say too seriously Of course, sir, if it were true, the young lady would have seen the resemblance too, sir

THE GENTLEMAN Did she?

WAITER No, sir She thought me like the bust of Shakespear in Stratford Church, sir That is why she calls me William, sir My real name is Walter, sir [*He turns to go back to the table, and sees Mrs Clandon coming up to the terrace from the beach by the steps*] Here is Mrs Clandon, sir [*To Mrs Clandon in an unobtrusively confidential tone*] Gentleman for you, maam

MRS CLANDON Weshall have two more gentlemen at lunch, William

WAITER Right, maam Thank you, maam [*He withdraws into the hotel*]

Mrs Clandon comes forward looking for her visitor, but passes over the gentleman without any sign of recognition

THE GENTLEMAN [*peering at her quaintly from under the umbrella*] Dont you know me?

MRS CLANDON [*incredulously, looking hard at him*] Are you Finch M'Comas?

M'COMAS Cant you guess? [*He shuts the umbrella, puts it aside, and jocularly plants himself with his hands on his hips to be inspected*]

MRS CLANDON I believe you are [*She gives him her hand The shake that ensues is that of old friends after a long separation*] Wheres your beard?

M'COMAS [*humorously solemn*] Would you employ a solicitor with a beard?

MRS CLANDON [*pointing to the silk hat on the table*] Is that your hat?

M'COMAS Would you employ a solicitor with a sombrero?

MRS CLANDON I have thought of you all these eighteen years with the beard and the sombrero [*She sits down on the garden seat M'Comas takes his chair again*] Do you go to the meetings of the Dialectical Society still?

M'COMAS [*gravely*] I do not frequent meetings now.

MRS CLANDON. Finch I see what has happened. You have become respectable.

M'COMAS. Havent you?

MRS CLANDON Not a bit

M'COMAS. You hold to our old opinions still?

MRS CLANDON. As firmly as ever.

M'COMAS. Bless me! And you are still ready to make speeches in public, in spite of your sex [*Mrs Clandon nods*]; to insist on a married woman's right to her own separate property [*she nods again*], to champion Darwin's view of the origin of species and John Stuart Mill's Essay on Liberty [*nod*]; to read Huxley, Tyndall, and George Eliot [*three nods*]; and to demand University degrees, the opening of the professions, and the parliamentary franchise for women as well as men.

MRS CLANDON [*resolutely*] Yes. I have not gone back one inch; and I have educated Gloria to take up my work when I must leave it. That is what has brought me back to England. I felt I had no right to bury her alive in Madeira my St Helena, Finch. I suppose she will be howled at as I was; but she is prepared for that

M'COMAS Howled at! My dear good lady: there is nothing in any of those views nowadays to prevent her marrying an archbishop. You reproached me just now for having become respectable. You were wrong: I hold to our old opinions as strongly as ever. I don't go to church; and I don't pretend I do. I call myself what I am: a Philosophic Radical standing for liberty and the rights of the individual, as I learnt to do from my master Herbert Spencer. Am I howled at? No: I'm indulged as an old fogey. I'm out of everything, because I've refused to bow the knee to Socialism.

MRS CLANDON [*shocked*] Socialism!

M'COMAS. Yes. Socialism. That's what Miss Gloria will be up to her ears in before the end of the month if you let her loose here.

MRS CLANDON [*emphatically*] But I can prove to her that Socialism is a fallacy

M'COMAS [*touchingly*] It is by proving that, Mrs Clandon, that I have lost all my young disciples Be careful what you do let her go her own way [*With some bitterness*] We're old fashioned the world thinks it has left us behind There is only one place in all England where your opinions would still pass as advanced

MRS CLANDON [*scornfully unconvinced*] The Church, perhaps?

M'COMAS No the theatre And now to business! Why have you made me come down here?

MRS CLANDON Well, partly because I wanted to see you -

M'COMAS [*with good-humored irony*] Thanks

MRS CLANDON - and partly because I want you to explain everything to the children They know nothing, and now that we have come back to England it is impossible to leave them in ignorance any longer [*Agitated*] Finch I cannot bring myself to tell them I -

She is interrupted by the twins and Gloria Dolly comes tearing up the steps, racing Phil, who combines terrific speed with an unhurried propriety of bearing which, however, costs him the race, as Dolly reaches her mother first and almost upsets the garden seat by the precipitancy of her embrace

DOLLY [*breathless*] It's all right, mamma The dentist is coming, and he's bringing his old man

MRS CLANDON Dolly, dear dont you see Mr M'Comas? [*M'Comas rises, smiling*]

DOLLY [*her face falling with the most disparagingly obvious disappointment*] This! Where are the flowing locks?

PHILIP [*seconding her warmly*] Where the beard? the cloak? the poetic exterior?

DOLLY Oh, Mr M'Comas, youve gone and spoiled yourself Why didnt you wait til we'd seen you?

M'COMAS [*taken aback, but rallying his humor to meet the emergency*] Because eighteen years is too long for a solicitor to go without having his hair cut

GLORIA [*at the other side of M'Comas*] How do you do, Mr M'Comas? [*He turns, and she takes his hand and presses it, with*

a frank straight look into his eyes]. We are glad to meet you at last.

M'COMAS. Miss Gloria, I presume? [*Gloria smiles assent; releases his hand after a final pressure; and retires behind the garden seat, leaning over the back beside Mrs Clandon*]. And this young gentleman?

PHILIP I was christened in a comparatively prosaic mood. My name is –

DOLLY [*completing his sentence for him declamatorily*] 'Norval. On the Grampian hills' –

PHILIP [*declaiming gravely*] 'My father feeds his flock, a frugal swain' –

MRS CLANDON [*remonstrating*] Dear, dear children: dont be silly Everything is so new to them here, Finch, that they are in the wildest spirits. They think every Englishman they meet is a joke

DOLLY. Well, so he is: it's not our fault.

PHILIP. My knowledge of human nature is fairly extensive, Mr M'Comas; but I find it impossible to take the inhabitants of this island seriously.

M'COMAS. I presume, sir, you are Master Philip [*offering his hand*].

PHILIP [*taking M'Comas's hand and looking solemnly at him*] 'I was Master Philip' was so for many years; just as you were once Master Finch. [*He gives the hand a single shake and drops it; then turns away, exclaiming meditatively*] How strange it is to look back on our boyhood!

DOLLY [*to Mrs Clandon*] Has Finch had a drink?

MRS CLANDON [*remonstrating*] Dearest: Mr M'Comas will lunch with us

DOLLY. Have you ordered for seven? Dont forget the old gentleman

MRS CLANDON. I have not forgotten him, dear. What is his name?

DOLLY. Chalkstones He'll be here at half past one. [*To M'Comas*] Are we like what you expected?

MRS CLANDON [*earnestly, even a little peremptorily*] Dolly: Mr

M'Comas has something more serious than that to tell you Children I have asked my old friend to answer the question you asked this morning He is your father's friend as well as mine, and he will tell you the story of my married life more fairly than I could Gloria are you satisfied?

GLORIA [*gravely attentive*] Mr M'Comas is very kind

M'COMAS [*nervously*] Not at all, my dear young lady not at all At the same time, this is rather sudden I was hardly prepared – er –

DOLLY [*suspiciously*] Oh, we dont want anything prepared

PHILIP [*exhorting him*] Tell us the truth

DOLLY [*emphatically*] Bald headed

M'COMAS [*nettled*] I hope you intend to take what I have to say seriously

PHILIP [*with profound gravity*] I hope it will deserve it, Mr M'Comas My knowledge of human nature teaches me not to expect too much

MRS CLANDON [*remonstrating*] Phil –

PHILIP Yes, mother all right I beg your pardon, Mr M'Comas dont mind us

DOLLY [*in conciliation*] We mean well

PHILIP Shut up, both

Dolly holds her lips M'Comas takes a chair from the luncheon table, places it between the little table and the garden seat, with Dolly on his right and Phil on his left, and settles himself in it with the air of a man about to begin a long communication The Clandons watch him expectantly

M'COMAS Ahem! Your father –

DOLLY How old is he?

PHILIP Sh!

MRS CLANDON [*softly*] Dear Dolly dont let us interrupt Mr M'Comas

M'COMAS [*emphatically*] Thank you, Mrs Clandon Thank you [*To Dolly*] Your father is fifty-seven

DOLLY [*with a bound, startled and excited*] Fifty-seven! Where does he live?

MRS CLANDON [*remonstrating*] Dolly! Dolly!

M'COMAS [*stopping her*] Let me answer that, Mrs Clandon. The answer will surprise you considerably. He lives in this town.

Mrs Clandon rises, intensely angry, but sits down again, speechless. Gloria watching her perplexedly.

DOLLY [*with conviction*] I knew it. Phil: Chalkstones is our father!

M'COMAS. Chalkstones!

DOLLY. Oh, Crampstones, or whatever it is. He said I was like his mother. I knew he must mean his daughter.

PHILIP [*very seriously*] Mr M'Comas: I desire to consider your feelings in every possible way; but I warn you that if you stretch the long arm of coincidence to the length of telling me that Mr Crampton of this town is my father, I shall decline to entertain the information for a moment.

M'COMAS. And pray why?

PHILIP. Because I have seen the gentleman; and he is entirely unfit to be my father, or Dolly's father, or Gloria's father, or my mother's husband.

M'COMAS. Oh, indeed! Well, sir, let me tell you that whether you like it or not, he is your father, and your sisters' father, and Mrs Clandon's husband. Now! What have you to say to that?

DOLLY [*whimpering*] You neednt be so cross. Crampton isnt your father.

PHILIP. Mr M'Comas: your conduct is heartless. Here you find a family enjoying the unspeakable peace and freedom of being orphans. We have never seen the face of a relative: never known a claim except the claim of freely chosen friendship. And now you wish to thrust into the most intimate relationship with us a man whom we dont know -

DOLLY [*vehemently*] An awful old man [*Reproachfully*] And you began as if you had quite a nice father for us!

M'COMAS [*angrily*] How do you know that he is not nice? And what right have you to choose your own father? [*Raising his voice*] Let me tell you, Miss Clandon, that you are too young to -

DOLLY [*interrupting him suddenly and eagerly*] Stop I forgot!

Has he any money?

M'COMAS He has a great deal of money

DOLLY [*delighted*] Oh, what did I always say, Phil?

PHILIP Dolly we have perhaps been condemning the old man too hastily Proceed, Mr M'Comas

M'COMAS I shall not proceed, sir I am too hurt, too shocked, to proceed

MRS CLANDON [*struggling with her temper*] Finch do you realize what is happening? Do you understand that my children have invited that man to lunch, and that he will be here in a few moments?

M'COMAS [*completely upset*] What! Do you mean? am I to understand? is it -

PHILIP [*impressively*] Steady, Finch Think it out slowly and carefully He's coming coming to lunch

GLORIA Which of us is to tell him the truth? Have you thought of that?

MRS CLANDON Finch you must tell him

DOLLY Oh, Finch is no good at telling things Look at the mess he has made of telling us

M'COMAS I have not been allowed to speak I protest against this

DOLLY [*taking his arm coaxingly*] Dear Finch dont be cross

MRS CLANDON Gloria let us go in He may arrive at any moment

GLORIA [*proudly*] Do not stir, mother I shall not stir We must not run away

MRS CLANDON My dear we cannot sit down to lunch just as we are We shall come back again We must have no bravado [*Gloria winces, and goes into the hotel without a word*] Come, Dolly [*As she goes to the hotel door, the waiter comes out with a tray of plates, etc for two additional covers*]

WAITER Gentlemen come yet, maam?

MRS CLANDON Two more to come still, thank you They will be here immediately [*She goes into the hotel*]

The waiter takes his tray to the service table

PHILIP. I have an idea. Mr M'Comas: this communication should be made, should it not, by a man of infinite tact?

M'COMAS. It will require tact, certainly.

PHILIP. Good! Dolly: whose tact were you noticing only this morning?

DOLLY [*seizing the idea with rapture*] Oh yes, I declare!

PHILIP. The very man! [*Calling*] William!

WAITER. Coming, sir.

M'COMAS [*horrified*] The waiter! Stop! stop! I will not permit this. I —

WAITER [*presenting himself between Phil and M'Comas*] Yes, sir.

M'Comas's complexion fades into stone grey: all movement and expression desert his eyes. He sits down stupefied.

PHILIP. William you remember my request to you to regard me as your son?

WAITER [*with respectful indulgence*] Yes, sir. Anything you please, sir.

PHILIP. William: at the very outset of your career as my father, a rival has appeared on the scene.

WAITER. Your real father, sir? Well, that was to be expected, sooner or later, sir, wasn't it? [*Turning with a happy smile to M'Comas*] Is it you, sir?

M'COMAS [*renewed by indignation*] Certainly not. My children know how to behave themselves

PHILIP. No, William. this gentleman was very nearly my father. he wooed my mother, but wooed her in vain.

M'COMAS [*outraged*] Well, of all the —

PHILIP. Sh! Consequently, he is only our solicitor. Do you know one Crampton, of this town?

WAITER. Cock-eyed Crampton, sir, of the Crooked Billet, is it?

PHILIP. I don't know. Finch does he keep a public house?

M'COMAS [*rising, scandalized*] No, no, no. Your father, sir, is a well known yacht builder, an eminent man here

WAITER [*impressed*] Oh! Beg pardon, sir, I'm sure. A son of Mr Crampton's! Dear me!

PHILIP. Mr Crampton is coming to lunch with us.

WAITER [*puzzled*] Yes, sir [*Diplomatically*] Dont usually lunch with his family, perhaps, sir?

PHILIP [*impressively*] William he does not know that we are his family He has not seen us for eighteen years He wont know us [*To emphasize the communication, Phil seats himself on the iron table with a spring, and looks at the waiter with his lips compressed and his legs swinging*]

DOLLY We want you to break the news to him, William

WAITER But I should think he'd guess when he sees your mother, miss

Phil's legs become motionless He contemplates the waiter rapidly

DOLLY [*dazzled*] I never thought of that

PHILIP Nor I [*Coming off the table and turning reproachfully on M'Comas*] Nor you!

DOLLY And you a solicitor!

PHILIP Finch your professional incompetence is appalling William your sagacity puts us all to shame

DOLLY You really are like Shakespear, William

WAITER Not at all, sir Dont mention it, miss Most happy, I'm sure, sir [*He goes back modestly to the luncheon table and lays the two additional covers, one at the end next the steps, and the other so as to make a third on the side furthest from the balustrade*]

PHILIP [*abruptly seizing M'Comas's arm and leading him towards the hotel*] Finch come and wash your hands

M'COMAS I am thoroughly vexed and hurt, Mr Clandon -

PHILIP [*interrupting him*] You will get used to us Come, Dolly [*M'Comas shakes him off and marches into the hotel Phil follows with unruffled composure*]

DOLLY [*turning for a moment on the steps as she follows them*] Keep your wits about you, William There will be fireworks

WAITER Right, miss You may depend on me, miss [*She goes into the hotel*]

Valentine comes lightly up the steps from the beach, followed doggedly by Crampton Valentine carries a walking stick Crampton, either because he is old and chilly, or with some idea of extenuating the unfashionableness of his reefer jacket, wears a light overcoat

He stops at the chair left by M'Comas in the middle of the terrace, and steadies himself for a moment by placing his hand on the back of it.

CRAMPTON Those steps make me giddy. [*He passes his hand over his forehead*] I have not got over that infernal gas yet.

He goes to the iron chair, so that he can lean his elbows on the little table to prop his head as he sits. He soon recovers, and begins to unbutton his overcoat. Meanwhile Valentine interviews the waiter.

VALENTINE. Waiter!

WAITER [*coming forward between them*] Yes, sir.

VALENTINE Mrs Lanfrey Clandon.

WAITER [*with a sweet smile of welcome*] Yes, sir. We're expecting you, sir That is your table, sir. Mrs Clandon will be down presently, sir. The young lady and gentleman were just talking about your friend, sir.

VALENTINE Indeed!

WAITER [*smoothly melodious*] Yes, sir. Great flow of spirits, sir A vein of pleasantry, as you might say, sir. [*Quickly, to Crampton, who has risen to get the overcoat off*] Beg pardon, sir; but if you'll allow me [*helping him to get the overcoat off, and taking it from him*]. Thank you, sir. [*Crampton sits down again; and the waiter resumes the broken melody*]. The young gentleman's latest is that you're his father, sir.

CRAMPTON. What!

WAITER Only his joke, sir, his favorite joke. Yesterday, I was to be his father Today, as soon as he knew you were coming, sir, he tried to put it up on me that you were his father his long lost father! Not seen you for eighteen years, he said

CRAMPTON [*startled*] Eighteen years!

WAITER. Yes, sir [*With gentle archness*] But I was up to his tricks, sir. I saw the idea coming into his head as he stood there, thinking what new joke he'd have with me. Yes, sir: that's the sort he is: very pleasant, very offhand and affable indeed, sir. [*Again changing his tempo to say to Valentine, who is putting his stick down against the corner of the garden seat*]

If you'll allow me, sir? [*He takes Valentine's stick*] Thank you, sir [*Valentine strolls up to the luncheon table and looks at the menu* The waiter turns to Crampton and continues his lay] Even the solicitor took up the joke, although he was in a manner of speaking in my confidence about the young gentleman, sir Yes, sir, I assure you, sir You would never imagine what respectable professional gentlemen from London will do on an outing, when the sea air takes them, sir

CRAMPTON Oh, there's a solicitor with them, is there?

WAITER The family solicitor, sir yes, sir Name of M'Comas, sir [*He goes towards the hotel entrance with the coat and stick, happily unconscious of the bomblike effect the name has produced on Crampton*]

CRAMPTON [*rising in angry alarm*] M'Comas! [*Calling to Valentine*] Valentine! [*Again, fiercely*] Valentine! [*Valentine turns*] This is a plant, a conspiracy This is my family! my children! my infernal wife

VALENTINE [*coolly*] Oh indeed! Interesting meeting! *He resumes his study of the menu*

CRAMPTON Meeting! Not for me Let me out of this [*Calling across to the waiter*] Give me that coat

WAITER Yes, sir [*He comes back, puts Valentine's stick carefully down against the luncheon table, and delicately shakes the coat out and holds it for Crampton to put on*] I seem to have done the young gentleman an injustice, sir, havnt I, sir?

CRAMPTON Rrrh! [*He stops on the point of putting his arms into the sleeves, and turns on Valentine with sudden suspicion*] Valentine you are in this You made this plot You -

VALENTINE [*decisively*] Bosh! [*He throws the menu down and goes round the table to look out unconcernedly over the parapet*]

CRAMPTON [*angrily*] What d'ye -

M'Comas, followed by Phil and Dolly, comes out, but recoils on seeing Crampton

WAITER [*softly interrupting Crampton*] Steady, sir Here they come, sir [*He takes up Valentine's stick and makes for the hotel, throwing the coat across his arm*]

M'Comas turns the corners of his mouth resolutely down and

crosses to Crampton, who draws back and glares, with his hands behind him M'Comas, with his brow opener than ever, confronts him in the majesty of a spotless conscience.

WAITER [*aside, as he passes Phil on his way out*] I've broke it to him, sir.

PHILIP. Invaluable William! [*He passes on to the table*].

DOLLY [*aside to the waiter*] How did he take it?

WAITER [*aside to her*] Startled at first, miss; but resigned· very resigned indeed, miss. [*He takes the stick and coat into the hotel*].

M'COMAS [*having stared Crampton out of countenance*] So here you are, Mr Crampton.

CRAMPTON. Yes, here· caught in a trap· a mean trap. Are those my children?

PHILIP [*with deadly politeness*] Is this our father, Mr M'Comas?

M'COMAS [*stoutly*] He is.

DOLLY [*conventionally*] Pleased to meet you again. [*She wanders idly round the table, exchanging a grimace with Valentine on the way*]

PHILIP. Allow me to discharge my first duty as host by ordering your wine. [*He takes the wine list from the table. His polite attention, and Dolly's unconcerned indifference, leave Crampton on the footing of a casual acquaintance picked up that morning at the dentist's. The consciousness of it goes through the father with so keen a pang that he trembles all over, his brow becomes wet, and he stares dumbly at his son, who, just sensible enough of his own callousness to intensely enjoy the humor and adroitness of it, proceeds pleasantly*] Finch: some crusted old port for you, as a respectable family solicitor, eh?

M'COMAS [*firmly*] Apollinaris only Nothing heating. [*He walks away to the side of the terrace, like a man putting temptation behind him*].

PHILIP Valentine —?

VALENTINE Would Lager be considered vulgar?

PHILIP. Probably We'll order some [*Turning to Crampton with cheerful politeness*] And now, Mr Crampton, what can we do for you?

CRAMPTON. What d'ye mean, boy?

PHILIP Boy! [*I'very solemnly*] Whose fault is it that I am a boy?

Crampton snatches the wine list rudely from him and irresolutely pretends to read it Philip abandons it to him with perfect politeness
DOLLY [*looking over Crampton's right shoulder*] The whisky's on the last page but one

CRAMPTON Let me alone, child

DOLLY Child! No, no you may call me Dolly if you like, but you mustnt call me child [*She slips her arm through Phil's, and the two stand looking at Crampton as if he were some eccentric stranger*]

CRAMPTON [*mopping his brow in rage and agony, and yet relieved even by their playing with him*] M'Comas we are – ha! – going to have a pleasant meal

M'COMAS [*resolutely cheerful*] There is no reason why it should not be pleasant

PHILIP Finch's face is a feast in itself

Mrs Clandon and Gloria come from the hotel Mrs Clandon advances with courageous self-possession and marked dignity of manner She stops at the foot of the steps to address Valentine, who is in her path Gloria also stops, looking at Crampton with a certain repulsion

MRS CLANDON Glad to see you again, Mr Valentine [*He smiles She passes on and confronts Crampton, intending to address him with complete composure, but his aspect shakes her She stops suddenly and says anxiously, with a touch of remorse*] Fergus you are greatly changed

CRAMPTON [*grimly*] I daresay A man does change in eighteen years

MRS CLANDON [*troubled*] I – I did not mean that I hope your health is good

CRAMPTON Thank you No it's not my health It's my happiness thats the change you meant, I think [*Breaking out suddenly*] Look at her, M'Comas! Look at her, and [*with a half laugh, half sob*] look at me!

PHILIP Sh! [*Pointing to the hotel entrance, where the waiter has just appeared*] Order before William!

DOLLY [*touching Crampton's arm warningly*] Ahem!

The waiter goes to the service table and beckons to the kitchen entrance, whence issue a young waiter with soup plates, and a cook, in white apron and cap, with the soup tureen. The young waiter remains and serves. the cook goes out, and reappears from time to time bringing in the courses. He carves, but does not serve. The waiter comes to the end of the luncheon table next the steps.

MRS CLANDON [*as they assemble at the table*] I think you have all met one another already today. Oh no: excuse me. [*Introducing*] Mr Valentine: Mr M'Comas. [*She goes to the end of the table nearest the hotel*]. Fergus: will you take the head of the table, please.

GRAMPTON. Ha! [*Bitterly*] The head of the table!

WAITER [*holding the chair for him with inoffensive encouragement*] This end, sir. [*Crampton submits, and takes his seat*]. Thank you, sir.

MRS CLANDON. Mr Valentine: will you take that side [*indicating the side next the parapet*] with Gloria? [*Valentine and Gloria take their places, Gloria next Crampton and Valentine next Mrs Clandon*]. Finch: I must put you on this side, between Dolly and Phil. You must protect yourself as best you can.

The three take the remaining side of the table, Dolly next her mother, Phil next his father. Soup is served.

WAITER [*to Crampton*] Thick or clear, sir?

GRAMPTON [*to Mrs Clandon*] Does nobody ask a blessing in this household?

PHILIP [*interposing smartly*] Let us first settle what we are about to receive. William!

WAITER Yes, sir. [*He glides swiftly round the table to Phil's left elbow On his way he whispers to the younger waiter*] Thick.

PHILIP. Two small Lagers for the children as usual, William, and one large for this gentleman [*indicating Valentine*] Large Apollinaris for Mr M'Comas.

WAITER. Yes, sir.

DOLLY Have a six of Irish in it, Finch?

M'COMAS [*scandalized*] No. No, thank you.

PHILIP. Number 413 for my mother and Miss Gloria as

before, and – [*turning inquiringly to Crampton*] Eh?

GRAMPTON [*scowling and about to reply offensively*] I –

WAITER [*striking in mellifluously*] All right, sir We know what

Mr Crampton likes here, sir [*He goes into the hotel*]

PHILIP [*looking gravely at his father*] You frequent bars Bad habit!

The cook, followed by a waiter with hot plates, brings in the fish from the kitchen to the service table, and begins slicing it

GRAMPTON You have learnt your lesson from your mother, I see

MRS CLANDON Phil will you please remember that your jokes are apt to irritate people who are not accustomed to us, and that your father is our guest today

GRAMPTON [*bitterly*] Yes a guest at the head of my own table [*The soup plates are removed*]

DOLLY [*sympathetically*] It's embarrassing, isn't it? It's just as bad for us, you know

PHILIP Sh! Dolly we are both wanting in tact [*To Crampton*] We mean well, Mr Crampton, but we are not yet strong in the filial line [*The waiter returns from the hotel with the drinks*] William come and restore good feeling

WAITER [*cheerfully*] Yes, sir Certainly, sir Small Lager for you sir [*To Crampton*] Seltzer and Irish, sir [*To M'Comas*] Apollinaris, sir [*To Dolly*] Small Lager, miss [*To Mrs Clandon, pouring out wine*] 413, madam [*To Valentine*] Large Lager for you, sir [*To Gloria*] 413, miss

DOLLY [*drinking*] To the family!

PHILIP [*drinking*] Hearth and Home!

Fish is served

M'COMAS We are getting on very nicely after all

DOLLY [*critically*] After all! After all what, Finch?

GRAMPTON [*sarcastically*] He means that you are getting on very nicely in spite of the presence of your father Do I take your point rightly, Mr M'Comas?

M'COMAS [*disconcerted*] No, no I only said 'after all' to round off the sentence I – er – er – er –

WAITER [*tactfully*] Turbot, sir?

M'COMAS [*intensely grateful for the interruption*] Thank you, waiter. thank you.

WAITER [*sotto voce*] Dont mention it, sir. [*He returns to the service table*].

CRAMPTON [*to Phil*] Have you thought of choosing a profession yet?

PHILIP I am keeping my mind open on that subject. William!

WAITER Yes, sir

PHILIP. How long do you think it would take me to learn to be a really smart waiter?

WAITER. Cant be learnt, sir It's in the character, sir [*Confidentially to Valentine, who is looking about for something*] Bread for the lady, sir? yes, sir. [*He serves bread to Gloria, and resumes, at his former pitch*] Very few are born to it, sir

PHILIP. You dont happen to have such a thing as a son, yourself, have you?

WAITER Yes, sir. oh yes, sir. [*To Gloria, again dropping his voice*] A little more fish, miss? you wont care for the joint in the middle of the day.

GLORIA. No, thank you.

The fish plates are removed, and the next course served.

DOLLY Is your son a waiter too, William?

WAITER [*serving Gloria with fowl*] Oh no, miss. he's too impetuous. He's at the Bar.

M'COMAS [*patronizingly*] A potman, eh?

WAITER [*with a touch of melancholy, as if recalling a disappointment softened by time*] No, sir the other bar Your profession, sir A Q C, sir.

M'COMAS [*embarrassed*] I'm sure I beg your pardon

WAITER Not at all, sir Very natural mistake, I'm sure, sir Ive often wished he was a potman, sir Would have been off my hands ever so much sooner, sir [*Aside to Valentine, who is again in difficulties*] Salt at your elbow, sir. [*Resuming*] Yes, sir had to support him until he was thirty-seven, sir But doing well now, sir very satisfactory indeed, sir Nothing less than fifty guineas, sir

M'COMAS Democracy, Crampton! Modern democracy!

WAITER [*calmly*] No, sir, not democracy only education, sir Scholarships, sir Cambridge Local, sir Sidney Sussex College, sir [*Dolly plucks his sleeve and whispers as he bends down*] Stone ginger, miss? Right, miss [*To M'Comas*] Very good thing for him, sir he never had any turn for real work, sir [*He goes into the hotel, leaving the company somewhat overwhelmed by his son's eminence*]

VALENTINE Which of us dare give that man an order again!

DOLLY I hope he wont mind my sending him for ginger-beer

CRAMPTON [*doggedly*] While he's a waiter it's his business to wait If you had treated him as a waiter ought to be treated, he'd have held his tongue

DOLLY What a loss that would have been! Perhaps he'll give us an introduction to his son and get us into London society

The waiter reappears with the ginger-beer

CRAMPTON [*growling contemptuously*] London society! London society! Youre not fit for any society, child

DOLLY [*losing her temper*] Now look here, Mr Crampton If you think —

WAITER [*softly, at her elbow*] Stone ginger, miss

DOLLY [*taken aback, recovers her good humor after a long breath, and says sweetly*] Thank you, dear William You were just in time [*She drinks*]

M'COMAS If I may be allowed to change the subject, Miss Clandon, what is the established religion in Madeira?

GLORIA I suppose the Portuguese religion I never inquired

DOLLY The servants come in Lent and kneel down before you and confess all the things theyve done, and you have to pretend to forgive them Do they do that in England, William?

WAITER Not usually, miss, They may in some parts, but it has not come under my notice, miss [*Catching Mrs Clandon's eye as the young waiter offers her the salad bowl*] You like it without

dressing, maam; yes, maam, I have some for you. [*To his young colleague, motioning him to serve Gloria*] This side, Jo. [*He takes a special portion of salad from the service table and puts it beside Mrs Glandon's plate. In doing so he observes that Dolly is making a wry face*]. Only a bit of watercress, miss, got in by mistake [*he takes her salad away*]. Thank you, miss [*To the young waiter, admonishing him to serve Dolly afresh*] Jo [*Resuming*] Mostly members of the Church of England, miss.

DOLLY. Members of the Church of England? Whats the subscription?

CRAMPTON [*rising violently amid general consternation*] You see how my children have been brought up, M'Comas You see it you hear it. I call all of you to witness - [*He becomes inarticulate, and is about to strike his fist recklessly on the table when the waiter considerably takes away his plate*].

MRS GLANDON [*firmly*] Sit down, Fergus. There is no occasion at all for this outburst. You must remember that Dolly is just like a foreigner here Pray sit down.

CRAMPTON [*subsiding unwillingly*] I doubt whether I ought to sit here and countenance all this I doubt it.

WAITER. Cheese, sir? or would you like a cold sweet?

CRAMPTON [*taken aback*] What? Oh! Cheese, cheese.

DOLLY. Bring a box of cigarets, William.

WAITER All ready, miss [*He takes a box of cigarets from the service table and places them before Dolly, who selects one and prepares to smoke He then returns to his table for the matches*].

CRAMPTON [*staring aghast at Dolly*] Does she smoke?

DOLLY [*out of patience*] Really, Mr Crampton, I'm afraid I'm spoiling your lunch I'll go and have my cigaret on the beach. [*She leaves the table with petulant suddenness and goes to the steps. The waiter strikes a match and adroitly lights her cigaret*]. Thank you, dear William. [*She vanishes down the steps*].

CRAMPTON [*furiously*] Margaret call that girl back Call her back, I say

M'COMAS [*trying to make peace*] Come, Crampton. never mind. She's her father's daughter thats all.

MRS CLANDON [*with deep resentment*] I hope not, Finch [*She rises they all rise a little*] Mr Valentine will you excuse me? I am afraid Dolly is hurt and put out by what has passed I must go to her

CRAMPTON To take her part against me, you mean

MRS CLANDON [*ignoring him*] Gloria will you take my place whilst I am away, dear [*She crosses to the steps and goes down to the beach*]

Crampton's expression is one of bitter hatred The rest watch her in embarrassed silence, feeling the incident to be a very painful one The waiter discreetly shepherds his assistant along with him into the hotel by the kitchen entrance, leaving the luncheon party to themselves

CRAMPTON [*throwing himself back in his chair*] Theres a mother for you, M'Comas! Theres a mother for you!

GLORIA [*steadfastly*] Yes a good mother

CRAMPTON And a bad father? Thats what you mean, eh?

VALENTINE [*rising indignantly and addressing Gloria*] Miss Clandon I -

CRAMPTON [*turning on him*] That girl's name is Crampton, Mr Valentine, not Clandon Do you wish to join them in insulting me?

VALENTINE [*ignoring him*] I'm overwhelmed, Miss Clandon It's all my fault I brought him here I'm responsible for him And I'm ashamed of him

CRAMPTON What d'y' mean?

GLORIA [*rising coldly*] No harm has been done, Mr Valentine We have all been a little childish, I am afraid Our party has been a failure let us break it up and have done with it [*She puts her chair aside and turns to the steps, adding, with slighting composure, as she passes Crampton*] Goodbye, father

She descends the steps with cold disgusted indifference They all look after her, and so do not notice the return of the waiter from the hotel, laden with Crampton's coat, Valentine's stick, a couple of shawls and parasols, and some camp stools, which he deposits on the bench

GRAMPTON [*to himself, staring after Gloria with a ghastly expression*] Father! Father!! [*He strikes his fist violently on the table*]. Now —

WAITER [*offering the coat*] This is yours, sir, I think, sir [*Crampton glares at him, then snatches it rudely and comes down the terrace towards the garden seat, struggling with the coat in his angry efforts to put it on. M'Comas rises and goes to his assistance. then takes his hat and umbrella from the little iron table, and turns towards the steps. Meanwhile the waiter, after thanking Crampton with unruffled sweetness for taking the coat, picks up the other articles and offers the parasols to Phil*]. The ladies' sunshades, sir Nasty glare off the sea today, sir: very trying to the complexion, sir I shall carry down the camp stools myself, sir

PHILIP You are old, Father William; but you are the most thoughtful of men. No· keep the sunshades and give me the camp stools [*taking them*].

WAITER [*with flattering gratitude*] Thank you, sir.

PHILIP. Finch. share with me [*giving him a couple*]. Come along [*They go down the steps together*].

VALENTINE [*to the waiter*] Leave me something to bring down One of these [*offering to take a sunshade*].

WAITER [*discreetly*] That's the younger lady's, sir [*Valentine lets it go*]. Thank you, sir If you'll allow me, sir, I think you had better take this. [*He puts down his burden on Crampton's chair, and produces from the tail pocket of his dress coat a book with a lady's handkerchief between the leaves to mark the page*] The elder young lady is reading it at present. [*Valentine takes it eagerly*] Thank you, sir. The Subjection of Women, sir, you see [*He takes up the burden again*] Heavier reading than you and I would care for at the seaside, sir. [*He goes down the steps*]

VALENTINE [*coming rather excitedly to Crampton*] Now look here, Crampton. are you at all ashamed of yourself?

GRAMPTON [*pugnaciously*] Ashamed of myself! What for?

VALENTINE For behaving like a bear. What will your daughter think of me for having brought you here?

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

CRAMPTON I was not thinking of what my daughter was thinking of you

VALENTINE No, you were thinking of yourself You're a perfect egomaniac

CRAMPTON [*heartrent*] She told you what I am a father a father robbed of his children What are the hearts of this generation like? Am I to come here after all these years? to see what my children are for the first time! to hear their voices! and carry it all off like a fashionable visitor, drop in to lunch, be Mr Crampton? Mister Crampton! What right have they to talk to me like that? I'm their father do they deny that? I'm a man, with the feelings of our common humanity have I no rights, no claims? In all these years who have I had round me? Servants, clerks, business acquaintances I've had respect from them aye, kindness Would one of them have spoken to me as that girl spoke? Would one of them have laughed at me as that boy was laughing at me all the time? [*Frantically*] My own children! Mister Crampton! My –

VALENTINE Come, come! they're only children She called you father

CRAMPTON Yes 'goodbye, father' Goodbye! Oh yes she got at my feelings with a stab!

VALENTINE [*taking this in very bad part*] Now look here, Crampton you just let her alone she's treated you very well I had a much worse time of it at lunch than you

CRAMPTON You!

VALENTINE [*with growing impetuosity*] Yes I I sat next her, and I never said a single thing to her the whole time couldn't think of a blessed word And not a word did she say to me

CRAMPTON Well?

VALENTINE Well? Well??? [*Tackling him very seriously, and talking faster and faster*] Crampton do you know what's been the matter with me today? You don't suppose, do you, that I'm in the habit of playing such tricks on my patients as I played on you?

GRAMPTON. I hope not

VALENTINE The explanation is that I'm stark mad, or rather that I've never been in my real senses before. I'm capable of anything I've grown up at last: I'm a Man; and it's your daughter that's made a man of me.

GRAMPTON [*incredulously*] Are you in love with my daughter?

VALENTINE [*his words now coming in a perfect torrent*] Love!

Nonsense: it's something far above and beyond that. It's life, it's faith, it's strength, certainty, paradise –

GRAMPTON [*interrupting him with acrid contempt*] Rubbish, man! What have you to keep a wife on? You can't marry her.

VALENTINE. Who wants to marry her? I'll kiss her hands; I'll kneel at her feet; I'll live for her; I'll die for her; and that'll be enough for me. Look at her book! See! [*He kisses the handkerchief*]. If you offered me all your money for this excuse for going down to the beach and speaking to her again, I'd only laugh at you. [*He rushes buoyantly off to the steps, where he bounces right into the arms of the waiter, who is coming up from the beach. The two save themselves from falling by clutching one another tightly round the waist and whirling one another round*]

WAITER [*delicately*] Steady, sir, steady!

VALENTINE [*shocked at his own violence*] I beg your pardon.

WAITER. Not at all, sir, not at all. Very natural, sir, I'm sure, sir, at your age The lady has sent me for her book, sir. Might I take the liberty of asking you to let her have it at once, sir.

VALENTINE With pleasure. And if you will allow me to present you with a professional man's earnings for six weeks – [*offering him Dolly's crown piece*]

WAITER [*as if the sum were beyond his utmost expectations*] Thank you, sir, much obliged. [*Valentine dashes down the steps*]. Very high-spirited young gentleman, sir: very manly and straight set up.

GRAMPTON [*in grumbling disparagement*] And making his fortune in a hurry, no doubt I know what his six weeks' earn-

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

ings come to [*He crosses the terrace to the iron table, and sits down*]

WAITER [*philosophically*] Well, sir, you never can tell Thats a principle in life with me, sir, if youll excuse my having such a thing, sir [*Delicately sinking the philosopher in the waiter for a moment*] Perhaps you havnt noticed that you hadnt touched that seltzer and Irish, sir, when the party broke up [*He takes the tumbler from the luncheon table and sets it before Crampton*] Yes, sir, you never can tell There was my son, sir¹ who ever thought that he would rise to wear a silk gown, sir² And yet, today, sir, nothing less than fifty guineas What a lesson sir¹

CRAMPTON Well, I hope he is grateful to you, and recognizes what he owes you, as a son should

WAITER We get on together very well, very well indeed, sir, considering the difference in our stations [*Crampton is about to take a drink*] A small lump of sugar, sir, will take the flatness out of the seltzer without noticeably sweetening the drink, sir Allow me, sir [*He drops a lump of sugar into the tumbler*] But as I say to him, wheres the difference after all? If I must put on a dress coat to shew what I am, sir, he must put on a wig and gown to shew what he is If my income is mostly tips, and theres a pretence that I dont get them, why, his income is mostly fees, sir, and I understand theres a pretence that he dont get them¹ If he likes society, and his profession brings him into contact with all ranks, so does mine too, sir If it's a little against a barrister to have a waiter for his father, sir, it's a little against a waiter to have a barrister for a son many people consider it a great liberty, sir, I assure you, sir Can I get you anything else, sir?

CRAMPTON No, thank you [*With bitter humility*] I suppose theres no objection to my sitting here for a while I cant disturb the party on the beach here

WAITER [*with emotion*] Very kind of you, sir, to put it as if it was not a compliment and an honor to us, Mr Crampton, very kind indeed The more you are at home here, sir, the better for us

CRAMPTON [*in poignant irony*] Home!

WAITER [*reflectively*] Well, yes, sir: thats a way of looking at it too, sir. I have always said that the great advantage of a hotel is that it's a refuge from home life, sir.

CRAMPTON I missed that advantage today, I think.

WAITER. You did, sir: you did. Dear me! It's the unexpected that always happens, isnt it? [*Shaking his head*] You never can tell, sir: you never can tell. [*He goes into the hotel*].

CRAMPTON [*his eyes shining hardly as he props his drawn miserable face on his hands*] Home Home!! [*Hearing someone approaching he hastily sits bolt upright. It is Gloria, who has come up the steps alone, with her sunshade and her book in her hands. He looks defiantly at her, with the brutal obstinacy of his mouth and the wistfulness of his eyes contradicting each other pathetically. She comes to the corner of the garden seat and stands with her back to it, leaning against the end of it, and looking down at him as if wondering at his weakness. too curious about him to be cold, but supremely indifferent to their kinship. He greets her with a growl*]. Well?

GLORIA. I want to speak to you for a moment.

CRAMPTON [*looking steadily at her*] Indeed? Thats surprising. You meet your father after eighteen years; and you actually want to speak to him for a moment! Thats touching. isnt it?

GLORIA. All that is what seems to me so nonsensical, so uncalled for What do you expect us to feel for you? to do for you? What is it you want? Why are you less civil to us than other people are? You are evidently not very fond of us. why should you be? But surely we can meet without quarrelling.

CRAMPTON [*a dreadful grey shade passing over his face*] Do you realize that I am your father?

GLORIA. Perfectly.

CRAMPTON. Do you know what is due to me as your father?

GLORIA For instance —?

CRAMPTON [*rising as if to combat a monster*] For instance! For instance!! For instance, duty, affection, respect, obedience —

GLORIA [*quitting her careless leaning attitude and confronting him promptly and proudly*] I obey nothing but my sense of what is right I respect nothing that is not noble That is my duty [*She adds, less firmly*] As to affection, it is not within my control I am not sure that I quite know what affection means [*She turns away with an evident distaste for that part of the subject, and goes to the luncheon table for a comfortable chair, putting down her book and sunshade*]

GRAMPTON [*following her with his eyes*] Do you really mean what you are saying?

GLORIA [*turning on him quickly and severely*] Excuse me that is an uncivil question I am speaking seriously to you, and I expect you to take me seriously [*She takes one of the luncheon chairs, turns it away from the table, and sits down a little wearily, saying*] Can you not discuss this matter coolly and rationally?

GRAMPTON Coolly and rationally! No I cant Do you understand that? I cant

GLORIA [*emphatically*] No That I cannot understand I have no sympathy with -

GRAMPTON [*shrinking nervously*] Stop! Dont say anything more yet you dont know what youre doing Do you want to drive me mad? [*She frowns, finding such petulance intolerable He adds hastily*] No I'm not angry indeed I'm not Wait, wait give me a little time to think [*He stands for a moment, screwing and clinching his brows and hands in his perplexity, then takes the end chair from the luncheon table and sits down beside her, saying, with a touching effort to be gentle and patient*] Now I think I have it At least I'll try

GLORIA [*firmly*] You see! Everything comes right if we only think it resolutely out

GRAMPTON [*in sudden dread*] No dont think I want you to feel thats the only thing that can help us Listen! Do you - but first - I forgot Whats your name? I mean your pet name They cant very well call you Sophronia

GLORIA [*with astonished disgust*] Sophronia! My name is Gloria I am always called by it

CRAMPTON [*his temper rising again*] Your name is Sophronia, girl: you were called after your aunt Sophronia, my sister: she gave you your first Bible with your name written in it.

GLORIA. Then my mother gave me a new name.

CRAMPTON [*angrily*] She had no right to do it. I will not allow this.

GLORIA. You had no right to give me your sister's name. I don't know her.

CRAMPTON. You're talking nonsense. There are bounds to what I will put up with. I will not have it. Do you hear that?

GLORIA [*rising warningly*] Are you resolved to quarrel?

CRAMPTON [*terrified, pleading*] No, no. sit down Sit down, won't you? [*She looks at him, keeping him in suspense. He forces himself to utter the obnoxious name*]. Gloria [*She marks her satisfaction with a slight tightening of the lips, and sits down*]. There! You see I only want to shew you that I am your father, my – my dear child. [*The endearment is so plaintively inept that she smiles in spite of herself, and resigns herself to indulge him a little*] Listen now. What I want to ask you is this. Don't you remember me at all? You were only a tiny child when you were taken away from me; but you took plenty of notice of things. Can't you remember someone whom you loved, or [*shyly*] at least liked in a childish way? Come! someone who let you stay in his study and look at his toy boats, as you thought them? [*He looks anxiously into her face for some response, and continues less hopefully and more urgently*] Someone who let you do as you liked there, and never said a word to you except to tell you that you must sit still and not speak? Someone who was something that no one else was to you – who was your father?

GLORIA [*unmoved*] If you describe things to me, no doubt I shall presently imagine that I remember them. But I really remember nothing.

CRAMPTON [*wistfully*] Has your mother never told you anything about me?

GLORIA. She has never mentioned your name to me. [*He*

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

groans involuntarily She looks at him rather contemptuously and continues] Except once, and then she did remind me of something I had forgotten

CRAMPTON [*looking up hopefully*] What was that?

GLORIA [*mercilessly*] The whip you bought to beat me with

CRAMPTON [*gnashing his teeth*] Oh! To bring that up against me! To turn you from me! When you need never have known [*Under a grinding, agonized breath*] Curse her!

GLORIA [*springing up*] You wretch! [*With intense emphasis*] You wretch! You dare curse my mother!

CRAMPTON Stop, or you'll be sorry afterwards I'm your father

GLORIA How I hate the name! How I love the name of Mother! You had better go

CRAMPTON I - I'm choking You want to kill me Some - I - [*His voice stifles he is almost in a fit*]

GLORIA [*going up to the balustrade with cool quick resourcefulness, and calling over it to the beach*] Mr Valentine!

VALENTINE [*answering from below*] Yes

GLORIA Come here for a moment, please Mr Crampton wants you [*She returns to the table and pours out a glass of water*]

CRAMPTON [*recovering his speech*] No let me alone I don't want him I'm all right, I tell you I need neither his help nor yours [*He raises and pulls himself together*] As you say, I had better go [*He puts on his hat*] Is that your last word?

GLORIA I hope so

He looks stubbornly at her for a moment, nods grimly, as if he agreed to that, and goes into the hotel She looks at him with equal steadiness until he disappears, when, with a gesture of relief, she turns to Valentine, who comes running up the steps

VALENTINE [*panting*] What's the matter? [*Looking round*] Where's Crampton?

GLORIA Gone [*Valentine's face lights up with sudden joy, dread, and mischief as he realizes that he is alone with Gloria She continues indifferently*] I thought he was ill, but he recovered himself He wouldn't wait for you I am sorry [*She goes for her book and parasol*]

VALENTINE So much the better He gets on my nerves after a while [*Pretending to forget himself*] How could that man have so beautiful a daughter!

GLORIA [*taken aback for a moment; then answering him with polite but intentional contempt*] That seems to be an attempt at what is called a pretty speech Let me say at once, Mr Valentine, that pretty speeches make very sickly conversation Pray let us be friends, if we are to be friends, in a sensible and wholesome way. I have no intention of getting married, and unless you are content to accept that state of things, we had much better not cultivate each other's acquaintance

VALENTINE [*cautiously*] I see May I ask just this one question? Is your objection an objection to marriage as an institution, or merely an objection to marrying me personally?

GLORIA I do not know you well enough, Mr Valentine, to have an opinion on the subject of your personal merits [*She turns away from him with infinite indifference, and sits down with her book on the garden seat*]. I do not think the conditions of marriage at present are such as any self-respecting woman can accept

VALENTINE [*instantly changing his tone for one of cordial sincerity, as if he frankly accepted her terms and was delighted and reassured by her principles*] Oh, then that's a point of sympathy between us already. I quite agree with you the conditions are most unfair [*He takes off his hat and throws it gaily on the iron table*]. No what I want is to get rid of all that nonsense. [*He sits down beside her, so naturally that she does not think of objecting, and proceeds, with enthusiasm*] Don't you think it a horrible thing that a man and a woman can hardly know one another without being supposed to have designs of that kind? As if there were no other interests! no other subjects of conversation! As if women were capable of nothing better!

GLORIA [*interested*] Ah, now you are beginning to talk humanly and sensibly, Mr Valentine.

VALENTINE [*with a gleam in his eye at the success of his hunter's guile*] Of course! two intelligent people like us! Isn't it

pleasant, in this stupid convention-ridden world, to meet with someone on the same plane? someone with an unprejudiced enlightened mind?

GLORIA [*earnestly*] I hope to meet many such people in England

VALENTINE [*dubiously*] Hm! there are a good many people here nearly forty millions Theyre not all consumptive members of the highly educated classes like the people in Madeira

GLORIA [*now full of her subject*] Oh, everybody is stupid and prejudiced in Madeira, weak sentimental creatures I hate weakness, and I hate sentiment

VALENTINE Thats what makes you so inspiring

GLORIA [*with a slight laugh*] Am I inspiring?

VALENTINE Yes Strength's infectious

GLORIA Weakness is, I know

VALENTINE [*with conviction*] Youre strong Do you know that you changed the world for me this morning? I was in the dumps, thinking of my unpaid rent, frightened about the future When you came in, I was dazzled [*Her brow clouds a little He goes on quickly*] That was silly, of course, but really and truly something happened to me Explain it how you will, my blood got - [*he hesitates, trying to think of a sufficiently unimpassioned word*] - oxygenated my muscles braced, my mind cleared, my courage rose Thats odd, isnt it? considering that I am not at all a sentimental man

GLORIA [*uneasily, rising*] Let us go back to the beach

VALENTINE [*darkly looking up at her*] What! you feel it too?

GLORIA Feel what?

VALENTINE Dread

GLORIA Dread?

VALENTINE As if something were going to happen It came over me suddenly just before you proposed that we should run away to the others

GLORIA [*amazed*] Thats strange very strange I had the same presentiment

VALENTINE [*solemnly*] How extraordinary [*Rising*] Well: shall we run away?

GLORIA Run away! Oh no: that would be childish. [*She sits down again. He resumes his seat beside her, and watches her with a gravely sympathetic air. She is thoughtful and a little troubled as she adds*] I wonder what is the scientific explanation of those fancies that cross us occasionally!

VALENTINE. Ah, I wonder! It's a curiously helpless sensation: isn't it?

GLORIA [*rebellng against the word*] Helpless?

VALENTINE. Yes, helpless. As if Nature, after letting us belong to ourselves and do what we judged right and reasonable for all these years, were suddenly lifting her great hand to take us – her two little children – by the scruffs of our little necks, and use us, in spite of ourselves, for her own purposes, in her own way.

GLORIA Isn't that rather fanciful?

VALENTINE [*with a new and startling transition to a tone of utter recklessness*] I don't know. I don't care. [*Bursting out reproachfully*] Oh, Miss Clandon, Miss Clandon: how could you?

GLORIA What have I done?

VALENTINE. Thrown this enchantment on me I'm honestly trying to be sensible and scientific and everything that you wish me to be But – but – oh, don't you see what you have set to work in my imagination?

GLORIA. I hope you are not going to be so foolish – so vulgar – as to say love.

VALENTINE. No, no, no, no, no Not love we know better than that. Let's call it chemistry You can't deny that there is such a thing as chemical action, chemical affinity, chemical combination. the most irresistible of all natural forces. Well, you're attracting me irresistibly. Chemically.

GLORIA [*contemptuously*] Nonsense!

VALENTINE. Of course it's nonsense, you stupid girl [*Gloria recoils in outraged surprise*]. Yes, stupid girl. that's a scientific fact, anyhow. You're a prig. a feminine prig that's what you are [*Rising*] Now I suppose you've done with me for

ever [*He goes to the iron table and takes up h's hat*]

GLORIA [*with elaborate calm, sitting up like a High-school mistress posing to be photographed*] That shews how very little you understand my real character I am not in the least offended [*He pauses and puts his hat down again*] I am always willing to be told my own defects, Mr Valentine, by my friends, even when they are as absurdly mistaken about me as you are I have many faults – very serious faults – of character and temper, but if there is one thing that I am not, it is what you call a prig [*She closes her lips trimly and looks steadily and challengingly at him as she sits more collectedly than ever*]

VALENTINE [*returning to the end of the garden seat to confront her more emphatically*] Oh yes, you are My reason tells me so my knowledge tells me so my experience tells me so

GLORIA Excuse my reminding you that your reason and your knowledge and your experience are not infallible At least I hope not

VALENTINE I must believe them Unless you wish me to believe my eyes, my heart, my instincts, my imagination, which are all telling me the most monstrous lies about you

GLORIA [*the collectedness beginning to relax*] Lies!

VALENTINE [*obstinately*] Yes, lies [*He sits down again beside her*] Do you expect me to believe that you are the most beautiful woman in the world?

GLORIA That is ridiculous, and rather personal

VALENTINE Of course it's ridiculous Well, that's what my eyes tell me [*Gloria makes a movement of contemptuous protest*] No I'm not flattering I tell you I don't believe it [*She is ashamed to find that this does not quite please her either*] Do you think that if you were to turn away in disgust from my weakness, I should sit down here and cry like a child?

GLORIA [*beginning to find that she must speak shortly and pointedly to keep her voice steady*] Why should you, pray?

VALENTINE Of course not I'm not such an idiot And yet my heart tells me I should my fool of a heart But I'll argue with my heart and bring it to reason If I loved you a

thousand times, I'll force myself to look the truth steadily in the face. After all, it's easy to be sensible: the facts are the facts. Whats this place? it's not heaven. it's the Marine Hotel. Whats the time? it's not eternity. it's about half past one in the afternoon. What am I? a dentist: a five shilling dentist!

GLORIA. And I am a feminine prig.

VALENTINE [*passionately*] No, no. I cant face that. I must have one illusion left. the illusion about you. I love you. [*He turns towards her as if the impulse to touch her were ungovernable. she rises and stands on her guard wrathfully. He springs up impatiently and retreats a step*]. Oh, what a fool I am! an idiot! You dont understand. I might as well talk to the stones on the beach. [*He turns away, discouraged*].

GLORIA [*reassured by his withdrawal, and a little remorseful*] I am sorry I do not mean to be unsympathetic, Mr Valentine, but what can I say?

VALENTINE [*returning to her with all his recklessness of manner replaced by an engaging and chivalrous respect*] You can say nothing, Miss Clandon. I beg your pardon: it was my own fault, or rather my own bad luck. You see, it all depended on your naturally liking me. [*She is about to speak: he stops her deprecatingly*] Oh, I know you mustnt tell me whether you like me or not, but —

GLORIA [*her principles up in arms at once*] Must not! Why not? I am a free woman. why should I not tell you?

VALENTINE [*pleading in terror, and retreating*] Dont. I'm afraid to hear.

GLORIA [*no longer scornful*] You need not be afraid. I think you are sentimental, and a little foolish; but I like you.

VALENTINE [*dropping into the nearest chair as if crushed*] Then it's all over. [*He becomes the picture of despair*].

GLORIA [*puzzled, approaching him*] But why?

VALENTINE. Because liking is not enough. Now that I think down into it seriously, I dont know whether I like you or not.

GLORIA [*looking down at him with wondering concern*] I'm sorry.

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

VALENTINE [*in an agony of restrained passion*] Oh, dont pity me Your voice is tearing my heart to pieces Let me alone, Gloria You go down into the very depths of me, troubling and stirring me I cant struggle with it I cant tell you –

GLORIA [*breaking down suddenly*] Oh, stop telling me what you feel I cant bear it

VALENTINE [*springing up triumphantly, the agonized voice now solid, ringing, and jubilant*] Ah, it's come at last my moment of courage [*He seizes her hands she looks at him in terror*] Our moment of courage! [*He draws her to him, kisses her with impetuous strength, and laughs boyishly*] Now youve done it, Gloria It's all over we're in love with one another [*She can only gasp at him*] But what a dragon you were! And how hideously afraid I was!

PHILIP'S VOICE [*calling from the beach*] Valentine!

DOLLY'S VOICE Mr Valentine!

VALENTINE Goodbye Forgive me [*He rapidly kisses her hands and runs away to the steps, where he meets Mrs Clandon ascending*]

Gloria, quite lost, can only stare after him

MRS CLANDON The children want you, Mr Valentine [*She looks anxiously around*] Is he gone?

VALENTINE [*puzzled*] He? [*Recollecting*] Oh, Crampton Gone this long time, Mrs Clandon [*He runs off buoyantly down the steps*]

GLORIA [*sinking upon the bench*] Mother!

MRS CLANDON [*hurrying to her in alarm*] What is it, dear?

GLORIA [*with heartfelt appealing reproach*] Why didnt you educate me properly?

MRS CLANDON [*amazed*] My child I did my best

GLORIA Oh, you taught me nothing nothing

MRS CLANDON What is the matter with you?

GLORIA [*with the most intense expression*] Only shame! shame!! shame!!! [*Blushing unendurably, she covers her face with her hands and turns away from her mother*]

ACT III

The Clandons' sitting room in the hotel. An expensive apartment on the ground floor, with a French window leading to the garden. In the centre of the room is a substantial table, surrounded by chairs, and draped with a maroon cloth on which opulently bound hotel and railway guides are displayed. A visitor entering through the window and coming down to this central table would have the fireplace on his left, and a writing table against the wall on his right, next the door, which is further down. He would, if his taste lay that way, admire the wall decoration of Lincrusta Walton in plum color and bronze lacquer, with dado and cornice; the ormolu consoles in the corners, the vases on pillar pedestals of veined marble with bases of polished black wood, one on each side of the window; the ornamental cabinet next the vase on the side nearest the fireplace, its centre compartment closed by an inlaid door, and its corners rounded off with curved panes of glass protecting shelves of cheap blue and white pottery, the bamboo tea table, with folding shelves, in the corresponding space on the other side of the window, the photogravures after Burton and Stacy Marks; the saddlebag ottoman in line with the door but on the other side of the room, the two comfortable seats of the same pattern on the hearth-rug, and finally, on turning round and looking up, the massive brass pole above the window, sustaining a pair of maroon rep curtains with decorated borders of staid green. Altogether, a room well arranged to flatter the middle-class occupant's sense of gentility, and reconcile him to a charge of a pound a day for its use.

Mrs Clandon sits at the writing table, correcting proofs. Gloria is standing at the window, looking out in a tormented reverie.

The clock on the mantelpiece strikes five with a sickly clink, the bell being unable to bear up against the black marble cenotaph in which it is immured.

MRS CLANDON. Five! I don't think we need wait any longer for the children. They are sure to get tea somewhere.

GLORIA [*wearily*]. Shall I ring?

MRS CLANDON. Do, my dear. [*Gloria goes to the hearth and rings*]. I have finished these proofs at last, thank goodness!

GLORIA [*strolling listlessly across the room and coming behind her mother's chair*] What proofs?

MRS CLANDON The new edition of Twentieth Century Women

GLORIA [*with a bitter smile*] There's a chapter missing

MRS CLANDON [*beginning to hunt among her proofs*] Is there? Surely not

GLORIA I mean an unwritten one Perhaps I shall write it for you - when I know the end of it [*She goes back to the window*]

MRS CLANDON Gloria! More enigmas!

GLORIA Oh no The same enigma

MRS CLANDON [*puzzled and rather troubled, after watching her for a moment*] My dear?

GLORIA [*returning*] Yes

MRS CLANDON You know I never ask questions

GLORIA [*kneeling beside her chair*] I know, I know [*She suddenly throws her arm about her mother and embraces her almost passionately*]

MRS CLANDON [*gently, smiling but embarrassed*] My dear you are getting quite sentimental

GLORIA [*recoiling*] Ah no, no Oh, don't say that Oh! [*She rises and turns away with a gesture as if tearing herself*]

MRS CLANDON [*mildly*] My dear what is the matter? What -
The waiter enters with the tea-tray

WAITER [*balmily*] Was this what you rang for, maam?

MRS CLANDON Thank you, yes [*She turns her chair away from the writing table, and sits down again Gloria crosses to the hearth and sits crouching there with her face averted*]

WAITER [*placing the tray temporarily on the centre table*] I thought so, maam Curious how the nerves seem to give out in the afternoon without a cup of tea [*He fetches the tea table and places it in front of Mrs Clandon, conversing meanwhile*] The young lady and gentleman have just come back, maam they have been out in a boat, maam Very pleasant on a fine afternoon like this very pleasant and invigorating indeed [*He takes the tray from the centre table and puts it on the*

tea table]. Mr M'Comas will not come to tea, maam he has gone to call upon Mr Crampton. [*He takes a couple of chairs and sets one at each end of the tea table*].

GLORIA [*looking round with an impulse of terror*] And the other gentleman?

WAITER [*reassuringly, as he unconsciously drops for a moment into the measure of 'I've been roaming,' which he sang when a boy*] Oh, he's coming, miss: he's coming. He has been rowing the boat, miss, and has just run down the road to the chemist's for something to put on the blisters. But he will be here directly, miss: directly. [*Gloria, in ungovernable apprehension, rises and hurries towards the door*]

MRS CLANDON [*half rising*] Glo –

Gloria goes out. Mrs Clandon looks perplexedly at the waiter, whose composure is unruffled

WAITER [*cheerfully*] Anything more, maam?

MRS CLANDON Nothing, thank you

WAITER Thank you, maam [*As he withdraws, Phil and Dolly, in the highest spirits, come tearing in. He holds the door open for them then goes out and closes it*]

DOLLY [*ravenously*] Oh, give me some tea [*Mrs Clandon pours out a cup for her*]. We've been out in a boat. Valentine will be here presently.

PHILIP. He is unaccustomed to navigation. Wheres Gloria?

MRS CLANDON [*anxiously, as she pours out his tea*] Phil there is something the matter with Gloria. Has anything happened?

[*Phil and Dolly look at one another and stifle a laugh*] What is it?

PHILIP [*sitting down on her left*] Romeo –

DOLLY [*sitting down on her right*] – and Juliet.

PHILIP [*taking his cup of tea from Mrs Clandon*] Yes, my dear mother the old, old story. Dolly dont take all the milk [*he deftly takes the jug from her*] Yes in the spring –

DOLLY – a young man's fancy –

PHILIP – lightly turns to – thank you [*to Mrs Clandon, who has passed the biscuits*] – thoughts of love. It also occurs in the autumn. The young man in this case is –

DOLLY Valentine

- PHILIP And his fancy has turned to Gloria to the extent of—
- DOLLY —kissing her—
- PHILIP —on the terrace—
- DOLLY [*correcting him*] —on the lips, before everybody
- MRS CLANDON [*incredulously*] Phil! Dolly! Are you joking?
- [*They shake their heads*] Did she allow it?
- PHILIP We waited to see him struck to earth by the lightning of her scorn, but—
- DOLLY —but he wasn't
- PHILIP She appeared to like it
- DOLLY As far as we could judge [*Stopping Phil, who is about to pour out another cup*] No you've sworn off two cups
- MRS CLANDON [*much troubled*] Children you must not be here when Mr Valentine comes I must speak very seriously to him about this
- PHILIP To ask him his intentions? What a violation of Twentieth Century principles!
- DOLLY Quite right, mamma bring him to book Make the most of the nineteenth century while it lasts
- PHILIP Sh! Here he is
- VALENTINE [*entering*] Very sorry to be late, Mrs Clandon [*She takes up the tea-pot*] No, thank you I never take any No doubt Miss Dolly and Phil have explained what happened to me
- PHILIP [*momentously, rising*] Yes, Valentine we have explained
- DOLLY [*significantly, also rising*] We have explained very thoroughly
- PHILIP It was our duty [*Very seriously*] Come, Dolly [*He offers Dolly his arm, which she takes They look sadly at him, and go out gravely arm in arm, leaving Valentine staring*]
- MRS CLANDON [*rising and leaving the tea table*] Will you sit down, Mr Valentine I want to speak to you a little, if you will allow me [*Valentine goes slowly to the ottoman, his conscience presaging a bad quarter of an hour Mrs Clandon takes Phil's chair, and seats herself with gentle dignity Valentine sits down*]
- I must begin by throwing myself somewhat on your

consideration. I am going to speak of a subject of which I know very little· perhaps nothing I mean love.

VALENTINE. Love!

MRS CLANDON. Yes, love. Oh, you need not look so alarmed as that, Mr Valentine I am not in love with you.

VALENTINE [*overwhelmed*] Oh, really, Mrs – [*Recovering himself*] I should be only too proud if you were.

MRS CLANDON. Thank you, Mr Valentine. But I am too old to begin.

VALENTINE. Begin! Have you never –?

MRS CLANDON. Never. My case is a very common one, Mr Valentine. I married before I was old enough to know what I was doing. As you have seen for yourself, the result was a bitter disappointment for both my husband and myself. So you see, though I am a married woman, I have never been in love; I have never had a love affair; and, to be quite frank with you Mr Valentine, what I have seen of the love affairs of other people has not led me to regret that deficiency in my experience. [*Valentine, looking very glum, glances sceptically at her, and says nothing Her color rises a little, and she adds, with restrained anger*] You do not believe me?

VALENTINE [*confused at having his thought read*] Oh, why not? Why not?

MRS CLANDON. Let me tell you, Mr Valentine, that a life devoted to the Cause of Humanity has enthusiasms and passions to offer which far transcend the selfish personal infatuations and sentimentalities of romance. Those are not your enthusiasms and passions, I take it? [*Valentine, quite aware that she despises him for it, answers in the negative with a melancholy shake of his head*]. I thought not Well, I am equally at a disadvantage in discussing those so-called affairs of the heart in which you appear to be an expert

VALENTINE [*restlessly*] What are you driving at, Mrs Clandon?

MRS CLANDON. I think you know.

VALENTINE. Gloria?

MRS CLANDON. Yes. Gloria.

VALENTINE [*surrendering*] Well, yes I'm in love with Gloria
[*Interposing as she is about to speak*] I know what you're going
to say I've no money

MRS CLANDON I care very little about money, Mr Valentine

VALENTINE I then you're very different to all the other
mothers who have interviewed me

MRS CLANDON Ah, now we are coming to it, Mr Valentine
You are an old hand at this [*He opens his mouth to protest she
cuts him short with some indignation*] Oh, do you think, little
as I understand these matters, that I have not common
sense enough to know that a man who could make as much
way in one interview with such a woman as my daughter,
can hardly be a novice?

VALENTINE I can assure you -

MRS CLANDON [*stopping him*] I am not blaming you, Mr
Valentine It is Gloria's business to take care of herself, and
you have a right to amuse yourself as you please But -

VALENTINE [*protesting*] Amuse myself! Oh, Mrs Clandon!

MRS CLANDON [*relentlessly*] On your honor, Mr Valentine,
are you in earnest?

VALENTINE [*desperately*] On my honor I am in earnest [*She
looks searchingly at him His sense of humor gets the better of him,
and he adds quaintly*] Only, I always have been in earnest,
and yet - ' Well, here I am, you see

MRS CLANDON This is just what I suspected [*Severely*] Mr
Valentine you are one of those men who play with
women's affections

VALENTINE Well, why not, if the Cause of Humanity is the
only thing worth being serious about? However, I under-
stand [*Rising and taking his hat with formal politeness*] You
wish me to discontinue my visits

MRS CLANDON No I am sensible enough to be well aware
that Gloria's best chance of escape from you now is to
become better acquainted with you

VALENTINE [*unaffectedly alarmed*] Oh, don't say that, Mrs
Clandon You don't think that, do you?

MRS CLANDON I have great faith, Mr Valentine, in the

sound training Gloria's mind has had since she was a child.

VALENTINE [*amazingly relieved*] O-oh! Oh, thats all right [*He sits down again and throws his hat flippantly aside with the air of a man who has no longer anything to fear*].

MRS CLANDON [*indignant at his assurance*] What do you mean?

VALENTINE [*turning confidentially to her*] Come! shall I teach you something, Mrs Clandon?

MRS CLANDON [*stiffly*] I am always willing to learn.

VALENTINE. Have you ever studied the subject of gunnery? artillery? cannons and war-ships and so on?

MRS CLANDON. Has gunnery anything to do with Gloria?

VALENTINE. A great deal. By way of illustration. During this whole century, my dear Mrs Clandon, the progress of artillery has been a duel between the maker of cannons and the maker of armor plates to keep the cannon balls out. You build a ship proof against the best gun known· somebody makes a better gun and sinks your ship. You build a heavier ship, proof against that gun· somebody makes a heavier gun and sinks you again. And so on Well, the duel of sex is just like that

MRS CLANDON. The duel of sex!

VALENTINE Yes. youve heard of the duel of sex, havnt you? Oh, I forgot· youve been in Madeira the expression has come up since your time. Need I explain it?

MRS CLANDON [*contemptuously*] No.

VALENTINE. Of course not. Now what happens in the duel of sex? The old fashioned daughter received an old fashioned education to protect her against the wiles of man. Well, you know the result the old fashioned man got round her. The old fashioned mother resolved to protect her daughter more effectually – to find some armor too strong for the old fashioned man So she gave her daughter a scientific education· your plan. That was a corker for the old fashioned man he thought it unfair, and tried to howl it down as unwomanly and all the rest of it But that didnt do him any good. So he had to give up his old fashioned plan of attack

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

• you know going down on his knees and swearing to love, honor, and obey and so on

MRS CLANDON Excuse me that was what the woman swore

VALENTINE Was it? Ah, perhaps you're right Yes of course it was Well, what did the man do? Just what the artillery man does went one better than the woman educated himself scientifically and beat her at that game just as he had beaten her at the old game I learnt how to circumvent the Women's Rights woman before I was twenty-three it's all been found out long ago You see, my methods are thoroughly modern

MRS CLANDON [*with quiet disgust*] No doubt

VALENTINE But for that very reason there's one sort of girl against whom they are of no use

MRS CLANDON Pray which sort?

VALENTINE The thoroughly old fashioned girl If you had brought up Gloria in the old way, it would have taken me eighteen months to get to the point I got to this afternoon in eighteen minutes Yes, Mrs Clandon the Higher Education of Women delivered Gloria into my hands, and it was you who taught her to believe in the Higher Education of Women

MRS CLANDON [*rising*] Mr Valentine you are very clever

VALENTINE [*rising also*] Oh, Mrs Clandon!

MRS CLANDON And you have taught me - nothing Goodbye

VALENTINE [*horrified*] Goodbye! Oh, maynt I see her before I go?

MRS CLANDON I am afraid she will not return until you have gone Mr Valentine She left the room expressly to avoid you

VALENTINE [*thoughtfully*] That's a good sign Goodbye [*He bows and makes for the door, apparently well satisfied*]

MRS CLANDON [*alarmed*] Why do you think

VALENTINE [*turning*] 'oor] Because
afraid of her, an if she were
me

sound training Gloria's mind has had since she was a child

VALENTINE [*amazingly relieved*] O-oh! Oh, thats all right. [*He sits down again and throws his hat slippantly aside with the air of a man who has no longer anything to fear*].

MRS CLANDON [*indignant at his assurance*] What do you mean?

VALENTINE [*turning confidentially to her*] Come! shall I teach you something, Mrs Clandon?

MRS CLANDON [*stiffly*] I am always willing to learn.

VALENTINE. Have you ever studied the subject of gunnery? artillery? cannons and war-ships and so on?

MRS CLANDON. Has gunnery anything to do with Gloria?

VALENTINE. A great deal. By way of illustration. During this whole century, my dear Mrs Clandon, the progress of artillery has been a duel between the maker of cannons and the maker of armor plates to keep the cannon balls out. You build a ship proof against the best gun known: somebody makes a better gun and sinks your ship. You build a heavier ship, proof against that gun: somebody makes a heavier gun and sinks you again. And so on. Well, the duel of sex is just like that.

MRS CLANDON. The duel of sex!

VALENTINE. Yes. youve heard of the duel of sex, havnt you? Oh, I forgot: youve been in Madeira: the expression has come up since your time. Need I explain it?

MRS CLANDON [*contemptuously*] No.

VALENTINE. Of course not. Now what happens in the duel of sex? The old fashioned daughter received an old fashioned education to protect her against the wiles of man. Well, you know the result: the old fashioned man got round her. The old fashioned mother resolved to protect her daughter more effectually - to find some armor too strong for the old fashioned man. So she gave her daughter a scientific education: your plan. That was a corker for the old fashioned man: he thought it unfair, and tried to howl it down as unwomanly and all the rest of it. But that didnt do him any good. So he had to give up his old fashioned plan of attack.

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

you know going down on his knees and swearing to love, honor, and obey and so on

MRS CLANDON Excuse me that was what the woman swore

VALENTINE Was it? Ah, perhaps you're right Yes of course it was Well, what did the man do? Just what the artillery man does went one better than the woman educated himself scientifically and beat her at that game just as he had beaten her at the old game I learnt how to circumvent the Women's Rights woman before I was twenty-three it's all been found out long ago You see, my methods are thoroughly modern

MRS CLANDON [*with quiet disgust*] No doubt

VALENTINE But for that very reason there's one sort of girl against whom they are of no use

MRS CLANDON Pray which sort?

VALENTINE The thoroughly old fashioned girl If you had brought up Gloria in the old way, it would have taken me eighteen months to get to the point I got to this afternoon in eighteen minutes Yes, Mrs Clandon the Higher Education of Women delivered Gloria into my hands, and it was you who taught her to believe in the Higher Education of Women

MRS CLANDON [*rising*] Mr Valentine you are very clever

VALENTINE [*rising also*] Oh, Mrs Clandon!

MRS CLANDON And you have taught me - nothing Goodbye

VALENTINE [*horrified*] Goodbye! Oh, mayn't I see her before I go?

MRS CLANDON I am afraid she will not return until you have gone Mr Valentine She left the room expressly to avoid you

VALENTINE [*thoughtfully*] That's a good sign Goodbye [*He bows and makes for the door, apparently well satisfied*]

MRS CLANDON [*alarmed*] Why do you think it a good sign?

VALENTINE [*turning near the door*] Because I am mortally afraid of her, and it looks as if she were mortally afraid of me

He turns to go and finds himself face to face with Gloria, who has just entered. She looks steadfastly at him. He stares helplessly at her; then round at Mrs Clandon; then at Gloria again, completely at a loss.

GLORIA [*white, and controlling herself with difficulty*] Mother: is what Dolly told me true?

MRS CLANDON. What did she tell you, dear?

GLORIA. That you have been speaking about me to this gentleman?

VALENTINE [*murmuring*] This gentleman! Oh!

MRS CLANDON [*sharply*] Mr Valentine: can you hold your tongue for a moment?

He looks piteously at them; then, with a despairing shrug, goes back to the ottoman and throws his hat on it.

GLORIA [*confronting her mother, with deep reproach*] Mother: what right had you to do it?

MRS CLANDON. I don't think I have said anything I have no right to say, Gloria.

VALENTINE [*confirming her officiously*] Nothing. Nothing whatever. [*The two women look at him crushingly*]. I beg your pardon. [*He sits down ignominiously on the ottoman*].

GLORIA. I cannot believe that anyone has any right even to think about things that concern me only. [*She turns away from them to conceal a painful struggle with her emotion*].

MRS CLANDON. My dear: if I have wounded your pride –

GLORIA [*turning on them for a moment*] My pride! My pride! Oh, it's gone. I have learnt now that I have no strength to be proud of. [*Turning away again*] But if a woman cannot protect herself, no one can protect her. No one has any right to try. not even her mother. I know I have lost your confidence, just as I have lost this man's respect; – [*She stops to regain command of her voice*].

VALENTINE. This man! Oh!

MRS CLANDON. Pray be silent, sir.

GLORIA [*continuing*] – but I have at least the right to be left alone in my disgrace. I am one of those weak creatures born to be mastered by the first man whose eye is caught by

them, and I must fulfil my destiny, I suppose At least spare me the humiliation of trying to save me [*She sits down, with her handkerchief to her eyes, at the further end of the table*]

VALENTINE [*jumping up*] Look here –

MRS CLANDON [*severely*] Mr Va –

VALENTINE [*recklessly*] No I will speak I've been silent for nearly thirty seconds [*He goes resolutely to Gloria*] Miss Clandon –

GLORIA [*bitterly*] Oh, not Miss Clandon you have found it quite safe to call me Gloria

VALENTINE No I wont you'll throw it in my teeth afterwards and accuse me of disrespect I say it's a heart-breaking falsehood that I dont respect you It's true that I didnt respect your old pride why should I? it was nothing but cowardice I didnt respect your intellect I've a better one myself it's a masculine speciality But when the depths stirred! when my moment came! when you made me brave! ah, then! then!! then!!!

GLORIA Then you respected me, I suppose

VALENTINE No I didnt I adored you [*She rises quickly and turns her back on him*] And you can never take that moment away from me So now I dont care what happens [*He comes back to the ottoman, addressing a cheerful explanation to nobody in particular*] I'm perfectly aware that I'm talking nonsense I cant help it [*To Mrs Clandon*] I love Gloria; and theres an end of it

MRS CLANDON [*emphatically*] Mr Valentine you are a most dangerous man Gloria come here [*Gloria, wondering a little at the command, obeys, and stands, with drooping head, on her mother's right hand, Valentine being on the opposite side Mrs Clandon then begins, with intense scorn*] Ask this man whom you have inspired and made brave, how many women have inspired him before [*Gloria looks up suddenly with a flash of jealous anger and amazement*], how many times he has laid the trap in which he has caught you, how often he has baited it with the same speeches, how much practice it has

taken to make him perfect in his chosen part in life as the Duellist of Sex.

VALENTINE. This isnt fair. Youre abusing my confidence, Mis Clandon.

MRS CLANDON Ask him, Gloria.

GLORIA [*in a flush of rage, going over to him with her fists clenched*]
Is that true?

VALENTINE Dont be angry –

GLORIA [*interrupting him implacably*] Is it true? Did you ever say that before? Did you ever feel that before? for another woman?

VALENTINE [*bluntly*] Yes.

Gloria raises her clenched hands

MRS CLANDON [*horrified, catching her uplifted arm*] Gloria!! My dear! Youre forgetting yourself.

Gloria, with a deep expiration, slowly relaxes her threatening attitude.

VALENTINE Remember: a man's power of love and admiration is like any other of his powers: he has to throw it away many times before he learns what is really worthy of it.

MRS CLANDON. Another of the old speeches, Gloria. Take care.

VALENTINE [*remonstrating*] Oh!

GLORIA [*to Mrs Clandon, with contemptuous self-possession*] Do you think I need to be warned now? [*To Valentine*] You have tried to make me love you

VALENTINE I have.

GLORIA Well, you have succeeded in making me hate you: passionately

VALENTINE [*philosophically*] It's surprising how little difference there is between the two [*Gloria turns indignantly away from him He continues, to Mrs Clandon*] I know men whose wives love them, and they go on exactly like that

MRS CLANDON Excuse me, Mr Valentine, but had you not better go?

GLORIA. You need not send him away on my account, mother He is nothing to me now, and he will amuse Dolly

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

and Phil [*She sits down with slighting indifference, at the end of the table nearest the window*]

VALENTINE [*gaily*] Of course thats the sensible way of looking at it Come, Mrs Clandon! you cant quarrel with a mere butterfly like me!

MRS CLANDON I very greatly mistrust you, Mr Valentine But I do not like to think that your unfortunate levity of disposition is mere shamelessness and worthlessness, -

GLORIA [*to herself, but aloud*] It is shameless, and it is worthless

MRS CLANDON [*continuing*] so perhaps we had better send for Phil and Dolly, and allow you to end your visit in the ordinary way

VALENTINE [*as if she had paid him the highest compliment*] You overwhelm me, Mrs Clandon Thank you

The waiter returns

WAITER Mr M'Comas, maam

MRS CLANDON Oh, certainly Bring him in

WAITER He wishes to see you in the reception room, maam

MRS CLANDON Why not here?

WAITER Well, if you will excuse my mentioning it, maam, I think Mr M'Comas feels that he would get fairer play if he could speak to you away from the younger members of your family, maam

MRS CLANDON Tell him they are not here

WAITER They are within sight of the door, maam, and very watchful, for some reason or other

MRS CLANDON [*going*] Oh, very well I'll go to him

WAITER [*holding the door open for her*] Thank you, maam [*She goes out He comes back into the room, and meets the eye of Valentine who wants him to go*] All right, sir Only the tea-things, sir [*Taking the tray*] Excuse me, sir Thank you, sir [*He goes out*]

VALENTINE [*to Gloria*] Look here Youll forgive me, sooner or later Forgive me now

GLORIA [*rising to level the declaration more intensely at him*] Never! While grass grows or water runs, never! never! never!!!

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

VALENTINE [*unabashed*] Well, I dont care. I cant be unhappy about anything. I shall never be unhappy again, never, never, never, while grass grows or water runs. The thought of you will always make me wild with joy. [*Some quick taunt is on her lips: he interposes swiftly*] No: I never said that before: thats new.

GLORIA. It will not be new when you say it to the next woman.

VALENTINE. Oh dont, Gloria, dont. [*He kneels at her feet*].

GLORIA. Get up! Get up! How dare you?

Phil and Dolly, racing, as usual, for first place, burst into the room. They check themselves on seeing what is passing. Valentine springs up.

PHILIP [*discreetly*] I beg your pardon. Come, Dolly. [*He offers her his arm and turns to go*].

GLORIA [*annoyed*] Mother will be back in a moment, Phil. [*Severely*] Please wait here for her. [*She turns away to the window, where she stands looking out with her back to them*].

PHILIP [*significantly*] Oh, indeed. Hmhm!

DOLLY. Ahah!

PHILIP. You seem in excellent spirits, Valentine.

VALENTINE. I am. [*He comes between them*]. Now look here. You both know whats going on. dont you?

Gloria turns quickly, as if anticipating some fresh outrage.

DOLLY. Perfectly.

VALENTINE. Well, it's all over. Ive been refused. Scorned. I'm here on sufferance only. You understand? it's all over. Your sister is in no sense entertaining my addresses, or condescending to interest herself in me in any way. [*Gloria, satisfied, turns back contemptuously to the window*]. Is that clear?

DOLLY. Serve you right. You were in too great a hurry.

PHILIP [*patting him on the shoulder*] Never mind youd never have been able to call your soul your own if she'd married you. You can now begin a new chapter in your life.

DOLLY. Chapter seventeen or thereabouts, I should imagine.

VALENTINE [*much put out by this pleasantry*] No: dont say things

like that That's just the sort of thoughtless remark that makes a lot of mischief

DOLLY Oh, indeed? Hmhm!

PHILIP Ahah! [*He goes to the hearth and plants himself there in his best head-of-the-family attitude*]

M'Comas, looking very serious, comes in quickly with Mrs Clandon, whose first anxiety is about Gloria She looks round to see where she is, and is going to join her at the window when Gloria comes down to meet her with a marked air of trust and affection Finally Mrs Clandon takes her former seat, and Gloria posts herself behind it M'Comas, on his way to the ottoman, is hailed by Dolly

DOLLY What cheer, Finch?

M'COMAS [*sternly*] Very serious news from your father, Miss Clandon Very serious news indeed [*He passes impressively to the ottoman, and sits down*]

Dolly, duly impressed, follows and sits beside him on his right

VALENTINE Perhaps I had better go

M'COMAS By no means, Mr Valentine You are deeply concerned in this [*Valentine takes a chair from the table and sits astride of it, leaning over the back, near the ottoman*] Mrs Clandon your husband demands the custody of his two younger children, who are not of age

MRS CLANDON [*in quick alarm*] To take Dolly from me?

DOLLY [*touched*] But how nice of him! He likes us, mamma

M'COMAS I am sorry to have to disabuse you of any such illusion, Miss Dorothea

DOLLY [*cooing ecstatically*] Dorothee-ee-ee-a! [*Nestling against his shoulder, quite overcome*] Oh, Finch!

M'COMAS [*nervously, shrinking away*] No, no, no, no!

MRS CLANDON The deed of separation gives me the custody of the children

M'COMAS It also contains a covenant that you are not to approach or molest him in any way

MRS CLANDON Well have I done so?

M'COMAS Whether the behavior of your younger children amounts to legal molestation is a question on which it may

be necessary to take counsel's opinion. At all events, Mr Crampton not only claims to have been molested, but he believes that he was brought here by a plot in which Mr Valentine acted as your agent.

VALENTINE. Whats that? Eh?

M'COMAS. He alleges that you drugged him, Mr Valentine.

VALENTINE. So I did.

M'COMAS. But what did you do that for?

DOLLY. Five shillings extra.

M'COMAS [*to Dolly, short-temperedly*] I must really ask you, Miss Clandon, not to interrupt this very serious conversation with irrelevant interjections. [*Vehemently*] I insist on having earnest matters earnestly and reverently discussed. [*This outburst produces an apologetic silence, and puts M'Comas himself out of countenance. He coughs, and starts afresh, addressing himself to Gloria*]. Miss Clandon: it is my duty to tell you that your father has also persuaded himself that Mr Valentine wishes to marry you –

VALENTINE [*interposing adroitly*] I do.

M'COMAS [*huffily*] In that case, sir, you must not be surprised to find yourself regarded by the young lady's father as a fortune hunter.

VALENTINE. So I am. Do you expect my wife to live on what I earn? tenpence a week!

M'COMAS [*revolted*] I have nothing more to say, sir. I shall return and tell Mr Crampton that this family is no place for a father. [*He makes for the door*].

MRS CLANDON [*with quiet authority*] Finch! [*He halts*]. If Mr Valentine cannot be serious, you can. Sit down. [*M'Comas, after a brief struggle between his dignity and his friendship, succumbs, seating himself this time midway between Dolly and Mrs Clandon*]. You know that all this is a made up case – that Fergus does not believe in it any more than you do. Now give me your real advice: your sincere, friendly advice. You know I have always trusted your judgment. I promise you the children will be quiet.

M'COMAS [*resigning himself*] Well, well! What I want to say

is this In the old arrangement with your husband, Mrs Clandon, you had him at a terrible disadvantage

MRS CLANDON How so, pray?

M'COMAS Well, you were an advanced woman, accustomed to defy public opinion, and with no regard for what the world might say of you

MRS CLANDON [*proud of it*] Yes that is true

Gloria, behind the chair, stoops and kisses her mother's hair, a demonstration which disconcerts her extremely

M'COMAS On the other hand, Mrs Clandon, your husband had a great horror of anything getting into the papers There was his business to be considered, as well as the prejudices of an old fashioned family

MRS CLANDON Not to mention his own prejudices

M'COMAS Now no doubt he behaved badly, Mrs Clandon

MRS CLANDON [*scornfully*] No doubt

M'COMAS But was it altogether his fault?

MRS CLANDON Was it mine?

M'COMAS [*hastily*] No Of course not

GLORIA [*observing him attentively*] You do not mean that, Mr M'Comas

M'COMAS My dear young lady, you pick me up very sharply But let me just put this to you When a man makes an unsuitable marriage (nobody's fault, you know, but purely accidental incompatibility of tastes), when he is deprived by that misfortune of the domestic sympathy which, I take it, is what a man marries for, when, in short, his wife is rather worse than no wife at all (through no fault of her own, of course), is it to be wondered at if he makes matters worse at first by blaming her, and even, in his desperation, by occasionally drinking himself into a violent condition or seeking sympathy elsewhere?

MRS CLANDON I did not blame him I simply rescued myself and the children from him

M'COMAS Yes, but you made hard terms, Mrs Clandon You had him at your mercy you brought him to his knees when you threatened to make the matter public by apply-

ing to the Courts for a judicial separation. Suppose he had had that power over you, and used it to take your children away from you and bring them up in ignorance of your very name, how would you feel? what would you do? Well, wont you make some allowance for his feelings? in common humanity.

MRS CLANDON. I never discovered his feelings. I discovered his temper, and his – [*she shivers*] the rest of his common humanity.

M'COMAS [*wistfully*] Women can be very hard, Mrs Clandon.

VALENTINE. Thats true.

GLORIA [*angrily*] Be silent. [*He subsides*].

M'COMAS [*rallying all his forces*] Let me make one last appeal.

Mrs Clandon: believe me, there are men who have a good deal of feeling, and kind feeling too, which they are not able to express. What you miss in Crampton is that mere veneer of civilization, the art of shewing worthless attentions and paying insincere compliments in a kindly charming way. If you lived in London, where the whole system is one of false good-fellowship, and you may know a man for twenty years without finding out that he hates you like poison, you would soon have your eyes opened. There we do unkind things in a kind way: we say bitter things in a sweet voice: we always give our friends chloroform when we tear them to pieces. But think of the other side of it! Think of the people who do kind things in an unkind way! people whose touch hurts, whose voices jar, whose tempers play them false, who wound and worry the people they love in the very act of trying to conciliate them, and who yet need affection as much as the rest of us. Crampton has an abominable temper, I admit. He has no manners, no tact, no grace. He'll never be able to gain anyone's affection unless they will take his desire for it on trust. Is he to have none? not even pity? from his own flesh and blood?

DOLLY [*quite melted*] Oh how beautiful, Finch! How nice of you!

PHILIP [*with conviction*] Finch this is eloquence positive eloquence

DOLLY Oh mamma, let us give him another chance Let us have him to dinner

MRS CLANDON [*unmoved*] No, Dolly I hardly got any lunch My dear Finch there is not the least use in talking to me about Fergus You have never been married to him I have

M^r COMAS [*to Gloria*] Miss Clandon I have hitherto refrained from appealing to you, because, if what Mr Crampton told me be true, you have been more merciless even than your mother

GLORIA [*defiantly*] You appeal from her strength to my weakness!

M^r COMAS Not your weakness, Miss Clandon I appeal from her intellect to your heart

GLORIA I have learnt to mistrust my heart [*With an angry glance at Valentine*] I would tear my heart out and throw it away if I could My answer to you is my mother's answer

M^r COMAS [*defeated*] Well, I am sorry Very sorry I have done my best [*He rises and prepares to go, deeply dissatisfied*]

MRS CLANDON But what did you expect, Finch? What do you want us to do?

M^r COMAS The first step for both you and Crampton is to obtain counsel's opinion as to whether he is bound by the deed of separation or not Now why not obtain this opinion at once, and have a friendly meeting [*her face hardens*] or shall we say a neutral meeting? to settle the difficulty? Here? In this hotel? Tonight? What do you say?

MRS CLANDON But where is the counsel's opinion to come from?

M^r COMAS It has dropped down on us out of the clouds On my way back here from Crampton's I met a most eminent Q C a man whom I briefed in the case that made his name for him He has come down here from Saturday to Monday for the sea air, and to visit a relative of his who lives here

He has been good enough to say that if I can arrange a meeting of the parties he will come and help us with his opinion. Now do let us seize this chance of a quiet friendly family adjustment. Let me bring my friend here and try to persuade Crampton to come too. Come: consent.

MRS CLANDON [*rather ominously, after a moment's consideration*]

Finch: I don't want counsel's opinion, because I intend to be guided by my own opinion. I don't want to meet Fergus again, because I don't like him, and don't believe the meeting will do any good. However [*rising*], you have persuaded the children that he is not quite hopeless. Do as you please

M'COMAS [*taking her hand and shaking it*] Thank you, Mrs Clandon. Will nine o'clock suit you?

MRS CLANDON. Perfectly. Phil: will you ring, please. [*Phil rings the bell*]. But if I am to be accused of conspiring with Mr Valentine, I think he had better be present.

VALENTINE [*rising*] I quite agree with you. I think it's most important

M'COMAS There can be no objection to that, I think. I have the greatest hopes of a happy settlement. Goodbye for the present. [*He goes out, meeting the waiter, who holds the door open for him*].

MRS CLANDON. We expect some visitors at nine, William. Can we have dinner at seven instead of half past?

WAITER [*at the door*] Seven, maam? Certainly, maam It will be a convenience to us this busy evening, maam There will be the band and the arranging of the fairy lights and one thing or another, maam.

DOLLY. Fairy lights!

PHILIP. A band! William what mean you?

WAITER. The fancy ball, miss

DOLLY AND PHILIP [*simultaneously rushing to him*] Fancy ball!!!

WAITER. Oh yes, sir. Given by the regatta committee for the benefit of the Life-boat, sir [*To Mrs Clandon*] We often have them, maam Chinese lanterns in the garden, maam very bright and pleasant, very gay and innocent indeed [*To*

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

Phil] Tickets downstairs at the office, sir, five shillings ladies half price if accompanied by a gentleman

PHILIP [*seizing his arm to drag him off*] To the office, William!

DOLLY [*breathlessly, seizing his other arm*] Quick, before they're all sold [*They rush him out of the room between them*]

MRS CLANDON [*following them*] But they mustn't go off dancing this evening They must be here to meet - [*She disappears*]

Gloria stares coolly at Valentine, and then deliberately looks at her watch

VALENTINE I understand I've stayed too long I'm going
GLORIA [*with disdainful punctiliousness*] I owe you some apology, Mr Valentine I am conscious of having spoken to you somewhat sharply Perhaps rudely

VALENTINE Not at all

GLORIA My only excuse is that it is very difficult to give consideration and respect when there is no dignity of character on the other side to command it

VALENTINE How is a man to look dignified when he's infatuated?

GLORIA [*angrily*] Don't say those things to me I forbid you They are insults

VALENTINE No they're only follies I can't help them

GLORIA If you were really in love, it would not make you foolish it would give you dignity! earnestness! even beauty

VALENTINE Do you really think it would make me beautiful? [*She turns her back on him with the coldest contempt*] Ah, you see you're not in earnest Love can't give any man new gifts It can only heighten the gifts he was born with

GLORIA [*sweeping round at him again*] What gifts were you born with, pray

VALENTINE Lightness of heart

GLORIA And lightness of head, and lightness of faith, and lightness of everything that makes a man

VALENTINE Yes, the whole world is like a feather dancing in the light now, and Gloria is the sun [*She rears her head*]

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

haughtily]. Beg pardon: I'm off. Back at nine. Goodbye.
[*He runs off gaily, leaving her standing in the middle of the room staring after him*].

GLORIA [*at the top of her voice; suddenly furious with him for leaving her*] Idiot!

ACT IV

The same room Nine o'clock Nobody present The lamps are lighted, but the curtains are not drawn The window stands wide open, and strings of Chinese lanterns are glowing among the trees outside, with the starry sky beyond The band is playing dance-music in the garden, drowning the sound of the sea

The waiter enters, shewing in Crampton and M'Comas Crampton looks cowed and anxious He sits down wearily and timidly on the ottoman

WAITER The ladies have gone for a turn through the grounds to see the fancy dresses, sir If you will be so good as to take seats, gentlemen, I shall tell them [*He is about to go into the garden through the window when M'Comas stops him*]

M'COMAS Stop a bit If another gentleman comes, shew him in without any delay we are expecting him

WAITER Right, sir What name, sir?

M'COMAS Boon Mr Boon He is a stranger to Mrs Clandon, so he may give you a card If so, the name is spelt B O H U N You will not forget

WAITER [*smiling*] You may depend on me for that, sir My own name is Boon, sir, though I am best known down here as Balmy Walters, sir By rights I should spell it with the aitch you, sir, but I think it best not to take that liberty, sir There is Norman blood in it, sir, and Norman blood is not a recommendation to a waiter

M'COMAS Well, well 'True hearts are more than coronets, and simple faith than Norman blood'

WAITER That depends a good deal on one's station in life, sir If you were a waiter, sir, you'd find that simple faith would leave you just as short as Norman blood I find it best to spell myself B double-O N, and keep my wits pretty sharp about me But I'm taking up your time, sir You'll excuse me, sir your own fault for being so affable, sir I'll tell the ladies you're here, sir [*He goes out into the garden through the window*]

M'COMAS. Crampton: I can depend on you, cant I?

CRAMPTON. Yes, yes. I'll be quiet. I'll be patient. I'll do my best.

M'COMAS. Remember. Ive not given you away. Ive told them it was all their fault.

CRAMPTON. You told me that it was all my fault.

M'COMAS. I told you the truth.

CRAMPTON [*plaintively*] If they will only be fair to me!

M'COMAS. My dear Crampton, they wont be fair to you: it's not to be expected from them at their age. If youre going to make impossible conditions of this kind, we may as well go back home at once.

CRAMPTON. But surely I have a right -

M'COMAS [*intolerantly*] You wont get your rights. Now, once for all, Crampton, did your promise of good behavior only mean that you wont complain if theres nothing to complain of? Because, if so - [*He moves as if to go*].

CRAMPTON [*miserably*] No, no: let me alone, cant you? Ive been bullied enough: Ive been tormented enough I tell you I'll do my best. But if that girl begins to talk to me like that and to look at me like - [*He breaks off and buries his head in his hands*].

M'COMAS [*relenting*] There, there. itll be all right, if you will only bear and forbear. Come: pull yourself together theres someone coming. [*Crampton, too dejected to care much, hardly changes his attitude. Gloria enters from the garden. M'Comas goes to meet her at the window, so that he can speak to her without being heard by Crampton*]. There he is, Miss Clandon Be kind to him. I'll leave you with him for a moment. [*He goes into the garden*].

Gloria comes in and strolls coolly down the middle of the room.

CRAMPTON [*looking round in alarm*] Wheres M'Comas?

GLORIA [*listlessly, but not unsympathetically*] Gone out To leave us together. Delicacy on his part, I suppose [*She stops beside him and looks quaintly down at him*] Well, father?

CRAMPTON [*submissively*] Well, daughter?

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

They look at one another with a melancholy sense of humor, though humor is not their strong point

GLORIA Shake hands [*They shake hands*]

CRAMPTON [*holding her hand*] My dear I'm afraid I spoke very improperly of your mother this afternoon

GLORIA Oh, dont apologize I was very high and mighty myself but Ive come down since oh, yes Ive been brought down [*She sits down on the floor beside his chair*]

CRAMPTON What has happened to you, my child?

GLORIA Oh, never mind I was playing the part of my mother's daughter then, but I'm not I'm my father's daughter [*Looking at him forlornly*] Thats a come down, isnt it?

CRAMPTON [*angry*] What! [*Her expression does not alter He surrenders*] Well, yes, my dear I suppose it is, I suppose it is I'm afraid I'm sometimes a little irritable, but I know whats right and reasonable all the time, even when I dont act on it Can you believe that?

GLORIA Believe it! Why, thats myself myself all over I know whats right and dignified and strong and noble, just as well as she does, but oh, the things I do! the things I do! the things I let other people do!

CRAMPTON [*a little grudgingly in spite of himself*] As well as she does? You mean your mother?

GLORIA [*quickly*] Yes, mother [*She turns to him on her knees and seizes his hands*] Now listen No treason to her no word, no thought against her She is our superior yours and mine high heavens above us Is that agreed?

CRAMPTON Yes, yes Just as you please, my dear

GLORIA [*not satisfied, letting go his hands and drawing back from him*] You dont like her?

CRAMPTON My child you havnt been married to her I have [*She raises herself slowly to her feet, looking at him with growing coldness*] She did me a great wrong in marrying me without really caring for me But after that, the wrong was all on my side, I daresay [*He offers her his hand again*]

GLORIA [*taking it firmly and warningly*] Take care Thats my

dangerous subject. My feelings – my miserable cowardly womanly feelings – may be on your side, but my conscience is on hers.

GRAMPTON. I'm very well content with that division, my dear. Thank you.

Valentine arrives. Gloria immediately becomes deliberately haughty.

VALENTINE. Excuse me; but it's impossible to find a servant to announce one – even the never failing William seems to be at the ball. I should have gone myself; only I havnt five shillings to buy a ticket. How are you getting on, Crampton? Better, eh?

GRAMPTON. I am myself again, Mr Valentine, no thanks to you.

VALENTINE. Look at this ungrateful parent of yours, Miss Clandon! I saved him from an excruciating pang; and he reviles me!

GLORIA [*coldly*] I am sorry my mother is not here to receive you, Mr Valentine. It is not quite nine o'clock; and the gentleman of whom Mr M'Comas spoke, the lawyer, has not yet come.

VALENTINE. Oh yes he has. I've met him and talked to him. [*With gay malice*] You'll like him, Miss Clandon. he's the very incarnation of intellect. You can hear his mind working.

GLORIA [*ignoring the jibe*] Where is he?

VALENTINE. Bought a false nose and gone to the fancy ball.

GRAMPTON [*crustily, looking at his watch*] It seems that everybody has gone to this fancy ball instead of keeping to our appointment here.

VALENTINE. Oh, he'll come all right enough. that was half an hour ago. I didnt like to borrow five shillings from him and go in with him; so I joined the mob and looked through the railings until Miss Clandon disappeared into the hotel through the window.

GLORIA. So it has come to this, that you follow me about in public to stare at me.

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

VALENTINE Yes somebody ought to chain me up

Gloria turns her back on him and goes to the fireplace He takes the snub very philosophically, and goes to the opposite side of the room The waiter appears at the window, ushering in Mrs Clandon and M'Comas

MRS CLANDON I am so sorry to have kept you all waiting
A grotesquely majestic stranger, in a domino and false nose with goggles, appears at the window

WAITER [to the stranger] Beg pardon, sir, but this is a private apartment, sir If you will allow me, sir, I will shew you the American bar and supper rooms, sir This way, sir

He goes into the garden, leading the way under the impression that the stranger is following him The majestic one, however, comes straight into the room to the end of the table, where, with impressive deliberation, he takes off the false nose and then the domino, rolling up the nose in the domino and throwing the bundle on the table like a champion throwing down his glove He is now seen to be a tall stout man between forty and fifty, clean shaven, with a midnight oil pallor emphasized by stiff black hair, cropped short and oiled, and eyebrows like early Victorian horsehair upholstery Physically and spiritually a coarsened man in cunning and logic a ruthlessly sharpened one His bearing as he enters is sufficiently imposing and disquieting, but when he speaks, his powerful menacing voice, impressively articulated speech, strong inexorable manner, and a terrifying power of intensely critical listening, raise the impression produced by him to absolute tremendousness

THE STRANGER My name is Bohun [General awe] Have I the honor of addressing Mrs Clandon? [Mrs Clandon bows Bohun bows] Miss Clandon? [Gloria bows Bohun bows] Mr Clandon?

CRAMPTON [insisting on his rightful name as angrily as he dares] My name is Crampton, sir

BOHUN Oh, indeed [Passing him over without further notice and turning to Valentine] Are you Mr Clandon?

VALENTINE [making it a point of honor not to be impressed by him] Do I look like it? My name is Valentine I did the drugging

BOHUN. Ah, quite so Then Mr Clandon has not yet arrived?
 WAITER [*entering anxiously through the window*] Beg pardon, maam; but can you tell me what became of that – [*He recognizes Bohun, and loses all his self-possession. Bohun waits rigidly for him to pull himself together*]. Beg pardon, sir, I'm sure, sir. [*Brokenly*] Was – was it you, sir?

BOHUN [*remorselessly*] It was I.

WAITER [*Unable to restrain his tears*] You in a false nose, Walter! [*He clings to a chair to support himself*]. I beg your pardon, maam. A little giddiness –

BOHUN [*commandingly*] You will excuse him, Mrs Clandon, when I inform you that he is my father.

WAITER [*heartbroken*] Oh no, no, Walter. A waiter for your father on top of a false nose! What will they think of you?

MRS CLANDON. I am delighted to hear it, Mr Bohun Your father has been an excellent friend to us since we came here.

Bohun bows gravely.

WAITER [*shaking his head*] Oh no, maam. It's very kind of you: very ladylike and affable indeed, maam; but I should feel at a great disadvantage off my own proper footing. Never mind my being the gentleman's father, maam it is only the accident of birth after all, maam. Youll excuse me, I'm sure, having interrupted your business [*He begins to make his way along the table, supporting himself from chair to chair, with his eye on the door*].

BOHUN. One moment [*The waiter stops, with a sinking heart*]. My father was a witness of what passed today, was he not, Mrs Clandon?

MRS CLANDON Yes, most of it, I think.

BOHUN In that case we shall want him

WAITER [*pleading*] I hope it may not be necessary, sir. Busy evening for me, sir, with that ball very busy evening indeed, sir.

BOHUN [*inexorably*] We shall want you.

MRS CLANDON [*politely*] Sit down, wont you?

WAITER [*earnestly*] Oh, if you please, maam, I really must

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

draw the line at sitting down I couldn't let myself be seen doing such a thing, ma'am thank you, I am sure, all the same [*He looks round from face to face wretchedly, with an expression that would melt a heart of stone*]

GLORIA Don't let us waste time William only wants to go on taking care of us I should like a cup of coffee

WAITER [*brightening perceptibly*] Coffee, miss? [*He gives a little gasp of hope*] Certainly, miss Thank you, miss very timely, miss, very thoughtful and considerate indeed [*To Mrs Clandon, timidly but expectantly*] Anything for you, ma'am?

MRS CLANDON Er - yes it's so hot, I think we might have a jug of claret cup

WAITER [*beaming*] Claret cup, ma'am! Certainly, ma'am

GLORIA Oh well, I'll have claret cup instead of coffee Put some cucumber in it

WAITER [*delighted*] Cucumber, miss! yes miss [*To Bohun*] Anything special for you, sir? You don't like cucumber, sir

BOHUN If Mrs Clandon will allow me syphon Scotch

WAITER Right, sir [*To Crampton*] Irish for you, sir, I think, sir? [*Crampton assents with a grunt The waiter looks inquiringly at Valentine*]

VALENTINE I like cucumber

WAITER Right, sir [*Summing up*] Claret cup, syphon, one Scotch and one Irish?

MRS CLANDON I think that's right

WAITER [*himself again*] Right, ma'am Directly, ma'am Thank you [*He ambles off through the window, having sounded the whole gamut of human happiness, from despair to ecstasy, in fifty seconds*]

M'COMAS We can begin now, I suppose

BOHUN We had better wait until Mrs Clandon's husband arrives

CRAMPTON What d'y' mean? I'm her husband

BOHUN [*instantly pouncing on the inconsistency between this and his previous statement*] You said just now that your name was Crampton

CRAMPTON. So it is.

MRS CLANDON	} <i>speaking</i>	{	I -
GLORIA			My -
M'COMAS			Mrs -
VALENTINE			You -

BOHUN [*drowning them in two thunderous words*] One moment.

[*Dead silence*]. Pray allow me. Sit down, everybody. [*They obey humbly. Gloria takes the saddle-bag chair on the hearth. Valentine slips round to her side of the room and sits on the ottoman facing the window, so that he can look at her. Crampton sits on the ottoman with his back to Valentine's. Mrs Clandon, who has all along kept at the opposite side of the room in order to avoid Crampton as much as possible, sits near the door, with M'Comas beside her on her left. Bohun places himself magisterially in the centre of the group, near the corner of the table on Mrs Clandon's side. When they are settled, he fixes Crampton with his eye, and begins*] In this family, it appears the husband's name is Crampton: the wife's, Clandon. Thus we have on the very threshold of the case an element of confusion.

VALENTINE [*getting up and speaking across to him with one-knee on the ottoman*] But it's perfectly simple -

BOHUN [*annihilating him with a vocal thunderbolt*] It is. Mrs Clandon has adopted another name. That is the obvious explanation which you feared I could not find out for myself. You mistrust my intelligence, Mr Valentine - [*stopping him as he is about to protest*] no: I don't want you to answer that I want you to think over it when you feel your next impulse to interrupt me.

VALENTINE [*dazed*] This is simply breaking a butterfly on a wheel. What does it matter? [*He sits down again*].

BOHUN. I will tell you what it matters, sir. It matters that if this family difference is to be smoothed over as we all hope it may be, Mrs Clandon, as a matter of social convenience and decency, will have to resume her husband's name [*Mrs Clandon assumes an expression of the most determined obstinacy*] or else Mr Crampton will have to call himself Mr Clandon. [*Crampton looks indomitably resolved to do nothing of*

the sort] No doubt you think that an easy matter, Mr Valentine [*He looks pointedly at Mrs Clandon, then at Crampton*] I differ from you [*He throws himself back in his chair, frowning heavily*]

M'COMAS [*timidly*] I think, Bohun, we had perhaps better dispose of the important questions first

BOHUN M'Comas there will be no difficulty about the important questions There never is It is the trifles that will wreck you at the harbor mouth [*M'Comas looks as if he considered this a paradox*] You dont agree with me, eh?

M'COMAS [*flatteringly*] If I did -

BOHUN [*interrupting him*] If you did, you would be me, instead of being what you are

M'COMAS [*fawning on him*] Of course, Bohun, your speciality-

BOHUN [*again interrupting him*] My speciality is being right when other people are wrong If you agreed with me I should be no use here [*He nods at him to drive the point home, then turns suddenly and forcibly on Crampton*] Now you, Mr Crampton what point in this business have you most at heart?

CRAMPTON [*beginning slowly*] I wish to put all considerations of self aside in this matter -

BOHUN [*cutting him short*] So do we all, Mr Crampton [*To Mrs Clandon*] You wish to put self aside, Mrs Clandon?

MRS CLANDON Yes I am not consulting my own feelings in being here

BOHUN So do you, Miss Clandon?

GLORIA Yes

BOHUN I thought so We all do

VALENTINE Except me My aims are selfish

BOHUN Thats because you think an affectation of sincerity will produce a better effect on Miss Clandon than an affectation of disinterestedness [*Valentine, utterly dismantled and destroyed by this just remark, takes refuge in a feeble speechless smile Bohun, satisfied at having now effectually crushed all rebellion, again throws himself back in his chair, with an air of being prepared to listen tolerantly to their grievances*] Now, Mr

Crampton, go on. It's understood that self is put aside. Human nature always begins by saying that.

CRAMPTON. But I mean it, sir.

BOHUN. Quite so. Now for your point.

CRAMPTON. Every reasonable person will admit that it's an unselfish one. It's about the children.

BOHUN. Well? What about the children?

CRAMPTON [*with emotion*] They have —

BOHUN [*pouncing forward again*] Stop. You're going to tell me about your feelings, Mr Crampton. Don't. I sympathize with them; but they're not my business. Tell us exactly what you want. That's what we have to get at.

CRAMPTON [*uneasily*] It's a very difficult question to answer, Mr Bohun.

BOHUN. Come. I'll help you out. What do you object to in the present circumstances of the children?

CRAMPTON. I object to the way they have been brought up.

Mrs Clandon's brow contracts ominously.

BOHUN. How do you propose to alter that now?

CRAMPTON. I think they ought to dress more quietly.

VALENTINE. Nonsense.

BOHUN [*instantly flinging himself back in his chair, outraged by the interruption*] When you are done, Mr Valentine: when you are quite done.

VALENTINE. What's wrong with Miss Clandon's dress?

CRAMPTON [*hotly to Valentine*] My opinion is as good as yours.

GLORIA [*warningly*] Father!

CRAMPTON [*subsiding piteously*] I didn't mean you, my dear.

[*Pleading earnestly to Bohun*] But the two younger ones! you have not seen them, Mr Bohun; and indeed I think you would agree with me that there is something very noticeable, something almost gay and frivolous in their style of dressing.

MRS CLANDON [*impatiently*] Do you suppose I choose their clothes for them? Really, this is childish.

CRAMPTON [*furious, rising*] Childish!

Mrs Clandon rises indignantly

M'COMAS	} [all rising and speak- ing together]	{ Crampton, you promised – Ridiculous They dress charm- ingly Pray let us behave reasonably
VALENTINE		
GLORIA		

Tumult Suddenly they hear a warning chime of glasses in the room behind them They turn guiltily and find that the waiter has just come back from the bar in the garden, and is jingling his tray as he comes softly to the table with it Dead silence

WAITER [to Crampton, setting a tumbler apart on the table] Irish for you, sir [Crampton sits down a little shamefacedly The waiter sets another tumbler and a syphon apart, saying to Bohun] Scotch and syphon for you, sir [Bohun waves his hand impatiently The waiter places a large glass jug and three tumblers in the middle] And claret cup [All subside into their seats Peace reigns]

MRS CLANDON I am afraid we interrupted you, Mr Bohun
BOHUN [calmly] You did [To the waiter, who is going out] Just wait a bit

WAITER Yes, sir Certainly, sir [He takes his stand behind Bohun's chair]

MRS CLANDON [to the waiter] You dont mind our detaining you, I hope Mr Bohun wishes it

WAITER [now quite at his ease] Oh no, maam, not at all, maam! It is a pleasure to me to watch the working of his trained and powerful mind very stimulating, very entertaining and instructive indeed, maam

BOHUN [resuming command of the proceedings] Now, Mr Crampton we are waiting for you Do you give up your objection to the dressing or do you stick to it?

CRAMPTON [pleading] Mr Bohun consider my position for a moment I havnt got myself alone to consider theres my sister Sophronia and my brother-in-law and all their circle They have a great horror of anything that is at all – at all – well –

BOHUN Out with it Fast? Loud? Gay?

CRAMPTON Not in any unprincipled sense, of course, but – but – [blurting it out desperately] those two children would

shock them. They're not fit to mix with their own people. That's what I complain of:

MRS CLANDON [*with suppressed anger*] Mr Valentine: do you think there is anything fast or loud about Phil and Dolly?

VALENTINE. Certainly not. It's utter 'bosh. Nothing can be in better taste.

GRAMPTON. Oh yes: of course you say so.

MRS CLANDON. William: you see a great deal of good English society. Are my children overdressed?

WAITER [*reassuringly*] Oh dear no, maam. [*Persuasively*] Oh no, sir, not at all. A little pretty and tasty no doubt, but very choice and classy, very genteel and high toned indeed. Might be the son and daughter of a Dean, sir, I assure you, sir. You have only to look at them, sir, to —

At this moment a harlequin and a columbine, waltzing to the band in the garden, whirl one another into the room. The harlequin's dress is made of lozenges, an inch square, of turquoise blue silk and gold alternately. His bat is gilt and his mask turned up. The columbine's petticoats are the epitome of a harvest field, golden orange and poppy crimson, with a tiny velvet jacket for the poppy stamens. They pass, an exquisite and dazzling apparition, between M'Comas and Bohun, and then back in a circle to the end of the table, where, as the final chord of the waltz is struck, they make a tableau in the middle of the company, the harlequin down on his left knee, and the columbine standing on his right knee, with her arms curved over her head. Unlike their dancing, which is charmingly graceful, their attitudinizing is hardly a success, and threatens to end in a catastrophe.

THE COLUMBINE [*screaming*] Lift me down, somebody: I'm going to fall Papa: lift me down.

GRAMPTON [*anxiously running to her and taking her hands*] My child!

DOLLY [*jumping down, with his help*] Thanks: so nice of you. [*Phil sits on the edge of the table and pours out some claret cup. Grampton returns to the ottoman in great perplexity*]. Oh, what fun! Oh dear! [*She seats herself with a vault on the front edge of the table, panting*]. Oh, claret cup! [*She drinks*].

- BOHUN [*in powerful tones*] This is the younger lady, is it?
- DOLLY [*slipping down off the table in alarm at his formidable voice and manner*] Yes, sir Please, who are you?
- MRS CLANDON This is Mr Bohun, Dolly, who has very kindly come to help us this evening
- DOLLY Oh, then he comes as a boon and a blessing –
- PHILIP Sh!
- CRAMPTON Mr Bohun – M'Comas I appeal to you Is this right? Would you blame my sister's family for objecting to it?
- DOLLY [*flushing ominously*] Have you begun again?
- CRAMPTON [*propitiating her*] No, no It's perhaps natural at your age
- DOLLY [*obstinately*] Never mind my age Is it pretty?
- CRAMPTON Yes, dear, yes [*He sits down in token of submission*]
- DOLLY [*insistently*] Do you like it?
- CRAMPTON My child how can you expect me to like it or to approve of it?
- DOLLY [*determined not to let him off*] How can you think it pretty and not like it?
- M'COMAS [*rising, scandalized*] Really I must say –
Bohun, who has listened to Dolly with the highest approval, is down on him instantly
- BOHUN No dont interrupt, M'Comas The young lady's method is right [*To Dolly, with tremendous emphasis*] Press your questions, Miss Clandon press your questions
- DOLLY [*turning to Bohun*] Oh dear, you are a regular over-whelmer! Do you always go on like this?
- BOHUN [*rising*] Yes Dont you try to put me out of countenance, young lady youre too young to do it [*He takes M'Comas's chair from beside Mrs Clandon's and sets it beside his own*] Sit down [*Dolly, fascinated, obeys, and Bohun sits down again M'Comas, robbed of his seat, takes a chair on the other side between the table and the ottoman*] Now, Mr Crampton, the facts are before you both of them You think youd like to have your two youngest children to live with you Well, you wouldnt – [*Crampton tries to protest, but Bohun will not have it*]

on any terms] no you wouldn't: you think you would; but I know better than you. You'd want this young lady here to give up dressing like a stage columbine in the evening and like a fashionable columbine in the morning. Well, she won't. never She thinks she will; but -

DOLLY [*interrupting him*] No I don't. [*Resolutely*] I'll never give up dressing prettily. Never. As Gloria said to that man in Madeira, never, never, never! while grass grows or water runs

VALENTINE [*rising in the wildest agitation*] What! What! [*Beginning to speak very fast*] When did she say that? Who did she say that to?

BOHUN [*throwing himself back with massive pitying remonstrance*] Mr Valentine -

VALENTINE [*pepperily*] Don't you interrupt me, sir. this is something really serious. I insist on knowing who Miss Clandon said that to.

DOLLY Perhaps Phil remembers Which was it, Phil? number three or number five?

VALENTINE. Number five!!!

PHILIP. Courage, Valentine! It wasn't number five: it was only a tame naval lieutenant who was always on hand. the most patient and harmless of mortals

GLORIA [*coldly*] What are we discussing now, pray?

VALENTINE [*very red*] Excuse me: I am sorry, I interrupted. I shall intrude no further, Mrs Clandon [*He bows to Mrs Clandon and marches away into the garden, boiling with suppressed rage*]

DOLLY Hmhm!

PHILIP Ahah!

GLORIA Please go on, Mr Bohun.

DOLLY [*striking in as Bohun, frowning formidably, collects himself for a fresh grapple with the case*] You're going to bully us, Mr Bohun

BOHUN I -

DOLLY [*interrupting him*] Oh yes, you are: you think you're not, but you are. I know by your eyebrows.

BOHUN [*câpitulating*] Mrs Clandon these are clever children clear headed well brought up children I make that admission deliberately Can you, in return, point out to me any way of inducing them to hold their tongues?

MRS CLANDON Dolly dearest -

PHILIP Our old failing, Dolly Silence!

Dolly holds her mouth

MRS CLANDON Now, Mr Bohun, before they begin again -

WAITER [*softly*] Be quick, sir be quick

DOLLY [*beaming at him*] Dear William!

PHILIP Sh!

BOHUN [*unexpectedly beginning by hurling a question straight at Dolly*] Have you any intention of getting married?

DOLLY I! Well, Finch calls me by my Christian name

M'COMAS [*starting violently*] I will not have this Mr Bohun I use the young lady's Christian name naturally as an old friend of her mother's

DOLLY Yes, you call me Dolly as an old friend of my mother's But what about Dorothee-ee-a?

M'Comas rises indignantly

CRAMPTON [*anxiously, rising to restrain him*] Keep your temper, M'Comas Dont let us quarrel Be patient

M'COMAS I will not be patient You are shewing the most wretched weakness of character, Crampton I say this is monstrous

DOLLY Mr Bohun please bully Finch for us

BOHUN I will M'Comas youre making yourself ridiculous Sit down

M'COMAS I -

BOHUN [*waving him down imperiously*] No sit down, sit down

M'Comas sits down sulkily, and Crampton, much relieved, follows his example

DOLLY [*to Bohun, muckly*] Thank you

BOHUN Now listen to me, all of you I give no opinion, M'Comas, as to how far you may or may not have committed yourself in the direction indicated by this young lady [*M'Comas is about to protest*] No dont interrupt me

if she doesnt marry you she will marry somebody' else. That is the solution of the difficulty as to her not bearing her father's name. The other lady intends to get married.

GLORIA [*flushing*] Mr Bohun!

BOHUN. Oh yes you do· you dont know it; but you do.

GLORIA [*rising*] Stop. I warn you, Mr Bohun, not to answer for my intentions.

BOHUN [*rising*] It's no use, Miss Clandon: you cant put me down. I tell you your name will soon be neither Clandon nor Crampton; and I could tell you what it will be if I chose. [*He goes to the table and takes up his domino They all rise; and Phil goes to the window. Bohun, with a gesture, summons the waiter to help him to robe*]. Mr Crampton: your notion of going to law is all nonsense: your children will be of age before you can get the point decided. [*Allowing the waiter to put the domino on his shoulder*] You can do nothing but make a friendly arrangement. If you want your family more than they want you, youll get the worst of the arrangement; if they want you more than you want them youll get the better of it [*He shakes the domino into becoming folds and takes up the false nose. Dolly gazes admiringly at him*]. The strength of their position lies in their being very agreeable people personally. The strength of your position lies in your income [*He claps on the false nose, and is again grotesquely transfigured*].

DOLLY [*running to him*] Oh, now you look quite like a human being Maynt I have just one dance with you? Can you dance?

Phil, resuming his part of harlequin, waves his bat as if casting a spell on them.

BOHUN [*thunderously*] Yes· you think I cant: but I can. Allow me [*He seizes her and dances off with her through the window in a most powerful manner, but with studied propriety and grace*].

PHILIP. 'On with the dance: let joy be unconfined.'
William

WAITER. Yes, sir.

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

PHILIP Can you procure a couple of dominos and false noses for my father and Mr M'Comas?

M'COMAS Most certainly not I protest –

GRAMPTON Yes, yes What harm will it do, just for once, M'Comas? Dont let us be spoil-sports

M'COMAS Crampton you are not the man I took you for [Pointedly] Bullies are always cowards [He goes disgustedly towards the window]

GRAMPTON [following him] Well, never mind We must indulge them a little Can you get us something to wear, waiter?

WAITER Certainly, sir [He precedes them to the window, and stands aside there to let them pass out before him] This way, sir Dominos and noses, sir?

M'COMAS [angrily, on his way out] I shall wear my own nose

WAITER [suavely] Oh dear yes, sir the false one will fit over it quite easily, sir plenty of room, sir, plenty of room [He goes out after M'Comas]

GRAMPTON [turning at the window to Phil with an attempt at gemal fatherliness] Come along, my boy Come along [He goes]

PHILIP [cheerily, following him] Coming, dad, coming [On the window threshold he stops, looks after Crampton, then turns fantastically with his bat bent into a halo round his head, and says with lowered voice to Mrs Clandon and Gloria] Did you feel the pathos of that? [He vanishes]

MRS CLANDON [left alone with Gloria] Why did Mr Valentine go away so suddenly, I wonder?

GLORIA [petulantly] I dont know Yes, I do know Let us go and see the dancing

They go towards the window, and are met by Valentine, who comes in from the garden walking quickly, with his face set and sulky

VALLNTINE [stiffly] Excuse me I thought the party had quite broken up

GLORIA [nagging] Then why did you come back?

VALENTINE. I came back because I am penniless. I cant get out that way without a five-shilling ticket

MRS CLANDON. Has anything annoyed you, Mr Valentine?

GLORIA. Never mind him, mother. This is a fresh insult to me that is all.

MRS CLANDON [*hardly able to realize that Gloria is deliberately provoking an altercation*] Gloria!

VALENTINE. Mis Clandon have I said anything insulting? Have I done anything insulting?

GLORIA. You have implied that my past has been like yours. That is the worst of insults.

VALENTINE. I imply nothing of the sort. I declare that my past has been blameless in comparison with yours.

MRS CLANDON [*most indignantly*] Mr Valentine!

VALENTINE. Well, what am I to think when I learn that Miss Clandon has made exactly the same speeches to other men that she has made to me? Five former lovers, with a tame naval lieutenant thrown in! Oh, it's too bad.

MRS CLANDON But you surely do not believe that these affairs – mere jokes of the children's – were serious, Mr Valentine?

VALENTINE. Not to you. Not to her, perhaps But I know what the men felt. [*With ludicrously genuine earnestness*] Have you ever thought of the wrecked lives, the unhappy marriages contracted in the recklessness of despair, the suicides, the – the – the –

GLORIA [*interrupting him contemptuously*] Mother this man is a sentimental idiot [*She sweeps away to the fireplace*]

MRS CLANDON [*shocked*] Oh, my dearest Gloria, Mr Valentine will think that rude.

VALENTINE I am not a sentimental idiot I am cured of sentiment for ever [*He turns away in dudgeon*]

MRS CLANDON. Mr Valentine, you must excuse us all Women have to unlearn the false good manners of their slavery before they acquire the genuine good manners of their freedom Dont think Gloria vulgar [*Gloria turns, astonished*]: she is not really so

GLORIA Mother! You apologize for me to him!

MRS CLANDON My dear you have some of the faults of youth as well as its qualities, and Mr Valentine seems rather too old fashioned in his ideas about his own sex to like being called an idiot And now had we not better go and see what Dolly is doing? [*She goes towards the window*]

GLORIA Do you go, mother I wish to speak to Mr Valentine alone

MRS CLANDON [*startled into a remonstrance*] My dear! [*Recollecting herself*] I beg your pardon, Gloria Certainly, if you wish [*She goes out*]

VALENTINE Oh, if your mother were only a widow! She's worth six of you

GLORIA That is the first thing I have heard you say that does you honor

VALENTINE Stuff! Come say what you want to say and let me go

GLORIA I have only this to say You dragged me down to your level for a moment this afternoon Do you think, if that had ever happened before, that I should not have been on my guard? that I should not have known what was coming, and known my own miserable weakness?

VALENTINE [*scolding at her passionately*] Dont talk of it in that way What do I care for anything in you but your weakness, as you call it? You thought yourself very safe, didnt you, behind your advanced ideas? I amused myself by upsetting them pretty easily

GLORIA [*insolently, feeling that now she can do as she likes with him*] Indeed!

VALENTINE But why did I do it? Because I was being tempted to awaken your heart to stir the depth in you Why was I tempted? Because Nature was in deadly earnest with me when I was in jest with her When the great moment came, who was awakened? who was stirred? in whom did the depths break up? In myself - myself I was transported you were only offended - shocked You are just an ordinary young lady, too ordinary to allow tame

lieutenants to go as far as I went. Thats all. I shall not trouble you with conventional apologies. Goodbye. [*He makes resolutely for the door*].

GLORIA. Stop. [*He hesitates*]. Oh, will you understand, if I tell you the truth, that I am not making advances to you?

VALENTINE. Pooh! I know what youre going to say. You think youre not ordinary: that I was right: that you really have those depths in your nature. It flatters you to believe it. [*She recoils*]. Well, I grant that you are not ordinary in some ways: you are a clever girl [*Gloria stifles an exclamation of rage, and takes a threatening step towards him*]; but youve not been awakened yet. You didnt care. you dont care. It was my tragedy, not yours. Goodbye. [*He turns to the door. She watches him, appalled to see him slipping from her grasp As he turns the handle, he pauses; then turns again to her, offering his hand*] Let us part kindly.

GLORIA [*enormously relieved, and immediately turning her back on him deliberately*] Goodbye. I trust you will soon recover from the wound.

VALENTINE [*brightening up as it flashes on him that he is master of the situation after all*] I shall recover: such wounds heal more than they harm After all, I still have my own Gloria.

GLORIA [*facing him quickly*] What do you mean?

VALENTINE. The Gloria of my imagination.

GLORIA [*proudly*] Keep your own Gloria. the Gloria of your imagination' [*Her emotion begins to break through her pride*] The real Gloria: the Gloria who was shocked, offended, horrified – oh yes, quite truly – who was driven almost mad with shame by the feeling that all her power over herself had broken down at her first real encounter with – with – [*The color rushes over her face again. She covers it with her left hand, and puts her right on his left arm to support herself*].

VALENTINE. Take care I'm losing my senses again. [*Summoning all her courage, she takes away her hand from her face and puts it on his right shoulder, turning him towards her and looking him straight in the eyes. He begins to protest agitatedly*]. Gloria be sensible. it's no use. I havnt a penny in the world.

GLORIA Cant you earn one? Other people do

VALENTINE [*half delighted, half frightened*] I never could youd be unhappy My dearest love I should be the merest fortune-hunting adventurer if – [*Her grip of his arms tightens, and she kisses him*] Oh Lord! [*Breathless*] Oh I – [*he gasps*] I dont know anything about women twelve years experience is not enough [*In a gust of jealousy she throws him away from her, and he reels back into a chair like a leaf before the wind*]

Dolly dances in, waltzing with the waiter, followed by Mrs Clandon and Finch, also waltzing, and Phil pirouetting by himself
DOLLY [*sinking on the chair at the writing-table*] Oh, I'm out of breath How beautifully you waltz, William!

MRS CLANDON [*sinking on the saddle-bag seat on the hearth*] Oh, how could you make me do such a silly thing, Finch! I havnt danced since the soiree at South Place twenty years ago

GLORIA [*peremptorily to Valentine*] Get up [*Valentine gets up abjectly*] Now let us have no false delicacy Tell my mother that we have agreed to marry one another

A silence of stupefaction ensues Valentine, dumb with panic, looks at them with an obvious impulse to run away

DOLLY [*breaking the silence*] Number Six!

PHILIP Sh!

DOLLY [*tumultuously*] Oh, my feelings! I want to kiss somebody, and we bar it in the family Wheres Finch?

M'COMAS No, positively

Crampton appears at the window

DOLLY [*running to Crampton*] Oh, youre just in time [*She kisses him*] Now [*leading him forward*] bless them

GLORIA No I will have no such thing, even in jest When I need a blessing, I shall ask my mother's

GRAMPTON [*to Gloria, with deep disappointment*] Am I to understand that you have engaged yourself to this young gentleman?

GLORIA [*resolutely*] Yes Do you intend to be our friend or –
DOLLY – or our father?

CRAMPTON. I should like to be both, my child. But surely –!

Mr Valentine. I appeal to your sense of honor.

VALENTINE. You're quite right. It's perfect madness. If we go out to dance together I shall have to borrow five shillings from her for a ticket. Gloria: don't be rash: you're throwing yourself away. I'd much better clear straight out of this, and never see any of you again. I shan't commit suicide. I shan't even be unhappy. It'll be a relief to me: I – I'm frightened, I'm positively frightened; and that's the plain truth.

GLORIA [*determinedly*] You shall not go.

VALENTINE [*quarling*] No, dearest: of course not. But – oh, will somebody only talk sense for a moment and bring us all to reason! I can't. Where's Bohun? Bohun's the man. Phil: go and summon Bohun.

PHILIP. From the vasty deep. I go. [*He makes his bat quiver in the air and darts away through the window*].

WAITER [*harmoniously to Valentine*] If you will excuse my putting in a word, sir, do not let a matter of five shillings stand between you and your happiness, sir. We shall be only too pleased to put the ticket down to you; and you can settle at your convenience. Very glad to meet you in any way, very happy and pleased indeed, sir.

PHILIP [*reappearing*] He comes. [*He waves his bat over the window*]

Bohun comes in, taking off his false nose and throwing it on the table in passing as he comes between Gloria and Valentine.

VALENTINE The point is, Mr Bohun –

M'COMAS [*interrupting from the hearthrug*] Excuse me, sir: the point must be put to him by a solicitor. The question is one of an engagement between these two young people. The lady has some property, and [*looking at Crampton*] will probably have a good deal more.

CRAMPTON. Possibly. I hope so.

VALENTINE. And the gentleman hasn't a rap.

BOHUN [*snarling Valentine to the point instantly*] Then insist on a settlement. That shocks your delicacy: most sensible pre-

cautions do But you ask my advice, and I give it to you
Have a settlement

GLORIA [*proudly*] He shall have a settlement

VALENTINE My good sir, I dont want advice for myself
Give her some advice

BOHUN She wont take it When youre married, she wont
take yours either – [*turning suddenly on Gloria*] oh no you
wont you think you will, but you wont He'll set to work
and earn his living – [*turning suddenly on Valentine*] oh yes
you will you think you wont, but you will She'll make
you

CRAMPTON [*only half persuaded*] Then, Mr Bohun, you dont
think this match an unwise one?

BOHUN Yes I do all matches are unwise It's unwise to be
born, it's unwise to be married, it's unwise to live, and it's
wise to die

WAITER [*insinuating himself between Crampton and Valentine*]
Then, if I may respectfully put a word in, sir, so much the
worse for wisdom!

PHILIP Allow me to remark that if Gloria has made up her
mind –

DOLLY The matter's settled, and Valentine's done for And
we're missing all the dances

VALENTINE [*to Gloria, gallantly making the best of it*] May I
have a dance –

BOHUN [*interposing in his grandest diapason*] Excuse me I claim
that privilege as counsel's fee May I have the honor? thank
you [*He dances away with Gloria, and disappears among the lan-
terns, leaving Valentine gasping*]

VALENTINE [*recovering his breath*] Dolly may I – [*offering him-
self as her partner*]?

DOLLY Nonsense! [*eluding him and running round the table to the
fireplace*] Finch my Finch! [*She pounces on M'Comas and
makes him dance*]

M'COMAS [*protesting*] Pray restrain – really – [*He is borne off
dancing through the window*]

VALENTINE [*making a last effort*] Mrs Clandon may I –

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

PHILIP [*forestalling him*] Come, mother. [*He seizes his mother and whirls her away*].

MRS CLANDON [*remonstrating*] Phil, Phil - [*She shares M'Comas's fate*].

GRAMPTON [*following them with senile glee*] Ho' ho! He! he! he! [*He goes into the garden chuckling*].

VALENTINE [*collapsing on the ottoman and staring at the waiter*] I might as well be a married man already.

WAITER [*contemplating the defeated Duellist of Sex with ineffable benignity*] Cheer up, sir, cheer up. Every man is frightened of marriage when it comes to the point; but it often turns out very comfortable, very enjoyable and happy indeed, sir - from time to time. *I* never was master in my own house, sir: my wife was like your young lady: she was of a commanding and masterful disposition, which my son has inherited. But if I had my life to live twice over, I'd do it again I'd do it again, I assure you. You never can tell, sir: you never can tell.

THE END

ARMS AND THE MAN

was first produced at the Avenue Theatre, London, 21 April 1894, with the following cast

MAJOR PAUL PETKOFF	James Welch
MAJOR SERGIUS SARANOFF	Bernard Gould
CAPTAIN BLUNTSCHLI	Yorke Stephens
MAJOR PLECHANOFF	A E W Mason
NICOLA	Orlando Barnett
CATHERINE PETKOFF	Mrs Charles Calvert
RAINA PETKOFF	Alma Murray
LOUKA	Florence Farr

CANDIDA

was first performed publicly in London at the Court Theatre, 26 April 1904, with the following cast

CANDIDA	Kate Rorke
PROSERPINE GARNETT	Sydney Fairbrother
THE REV JAMES MAVOR MORELL	Norman McKinnel
EUGENE MARCHBANKS	Granville Barker
MR BURGESS	A G Poulton
THE REV ALEXANDER MILL	Athol Stewart

THE MAN OF DESTINY

was first produced at the Grand Theatre, Croydon, 1 July 1897, with the following cast :

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE	Murray Carson
SUB-LIEUTENANT	L. H. Kelly
GIUSLPPE	Horace Hodges
STRANGE LADY	Florence West

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

was first produced by the Stage Society at the Royalty Theatre, London, 26 November 1899, with the following cast

FERGUS CRAMPTON	Herman Vezin
MR BOHUN, Q C	Charles Charrington
FINCH M'COMAS	George Raimond
MR VALENTINE	Yoi ke Stephens
PHILIP CLANDON	W Graham Browne
Jo	Leopold Profeit
WAITER	James Welch
PARLOR MAID	Alice Powell
MRS CLANDON	Elsie Chester
DOLLY CLANDON	Audrey Ford
GLORIA CLANDON	Mabel Terry Lewis

PRINCIPAL WORKS OF BERNARD SHAW

- An Unsocial Socialist, 1884
Cashel Byron's Profession, 1885-6
The Irrational Knot, 1885-7
Love Among the Artists, 1887-8
Fabian Essays in Socialism (edited), 1889
The Quintessence of Ibsenism, 1891
Widowers' Houses, 1893
The Perfect Wagnerite, 1898
Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant, 1898
The Man of Destiny, 1898
Fabianism and the Empire, 1900
Three Plays for Puritans, 1901
The Admirable Bashville, 1901
Man and Superman, 1903
Is Free Trade alive or dead?, 1906
How he Lied to her Husband, 1907
John Bull's Other Island, 1907
Major Barbara, 1907
The Sanity of Art, 1908
The Doctor's Dilemma, 1911
Getting Married, 1911
The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet, 1911
Commonsense about the War, 1914
Misalliance, 1914
The Dark Lady of the Sonnets, 1914
Fanny's First Play, 1914
Androcles and the Lion, Overruled, and Pygmalion, 1916
Preface to the W E A Education Year Book, 1918
Great Catherine, 1919
Heartbreak House, 1919
Back to Methuselah, 1921
Saint Joan, 1924
Translations and Tomfooleries, 1926
The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism, 1928
Immaturity, 1930
The Apple Cart, 1930
Doctors' Delusion, Crude Criminology, Sham Education, 1931
The Adventures of the Black Girl in her Search for God, 1932
Short Stories, Scraps, and Shavings, 1932
Too True to be Good, 1934

Village Wooing and On the Rocks, 1934
The Simploton of the Unexpected Isles, 1936
The Six of Calais, 1936
The Millionaness, 1936
Geneva, 1939
In Good King Charles's Golden Days, 1939
Everybody's Political What's What, 1944

lady isnt that rather a short allowance? I'm quite a straightforward man myself, but it wouldnt last me a whole morning

RAINA [*staring haughtily at him*] Do you know, sir, that you are insulting me?

BLUNTSCHLI I cant help it. When you strike that noble attitude and speak in that thrilling voice, I admire you, but I find it impossible to believe a single word you say.

RAINA [*superbly*] Captain Bluntschli!

BLUNTSCHLI [*unmoved*] Yes?

RAINA [*standing over him, as if she could not believe her senses*] Do you mean what you said just now? Do you know what you said just now?

BLUNTSCHLI I do.

RAINA [*gasping*] I! I!!! [*She points to herself incredulously, meaning 'I, Raina Petkoff tell lies!'* He meets her gaze unflinchingly. She suddenly sits down beside him, and adds, with a complete change of manner from the heroic to a babyish familiarity] How did you find me out?

BLUNTSCHLI [*promptly*] Instinct, dear young lady. Instinct, and experience of the world.

RAINA [*wonderingly*] Do you know, you are the first man I ever met who did not take me seriously?

BLUNTSCHLI You mean, dont you, that I am the first man that has ever taken you quite seriously?

RAINA Yes. I suppose I do mean that. [*Cosily, quite at her ease with him*] How strange it is to be talked to in such a way! You know, I've always gone on like that.

BLUNTSCHLI You mean the - ?

RAINA I mean the noble attitude and the thrilling voice. [*They laugh together*] I did it when I was a tiny child to my nurse. She believed in it. I do it before my parents. They believe in it. I do it before Sergius. He believes in it.

BLUNTSCHLI Yes, he's a little in that line himself, isnt he?

RAINA [*startled*] Oh! Do you think so?

BLUNTSCHLI You know him better than I do.

RAINA I wonder - I wonder is he? If I thought that -

[*Discouraged*] Ah, well! what does it matter? I suppose, now you've found me out, you despise me.

BLUNTSCHLI [*warmly, rising*] No, my dear young lady, no, no, no a thousand times. It's part of your youth! part of your charm! I'm like all the rest of them: the nurse, your parents, Sergius! I'm your infatuated admirer.

RAINA [*pleased*] Really?

BLUNTSCHLI [*slapping his breast smartly with his hand, German fashion*] Hand aufs Herz! Really and truly.

RAINA [*very happy*] But what did you think of me for giving you my portrait?

BLUNTSCHLI [*astonished*] Your portrait! You never gave me your portrait

RAINA [*quickly*] Do you mean to say you never got it?

BLUNTSCHLI. No [*He sits down beside her, with renewed interest, and says, with some complacency*] When did you send it to me?

RAINA [*indignantly*] I did not send it to you [*She turns her head away, and adds, reluctantly*] It was in the pocket of that coat.

BLUNTSCHLI [*pursing his lips and rounding his eyes*] Oh-o-oh! I never found it! It must be there still!

RAINA [*springing up*] There still! for my father to find the first time he puts his hand in his pocket! Oh, how could you be so stupid?

BLUNTSCHLI [*rising also*] It doesn't matter: I suppose it's only a photograph! how can he tell who it was intended for? Tell him he put it there himself!

RAINA [*bitterly*] Yes! that is so clever! isn't it? [*Distractedly*] Oh! what shall I do?

BLUNTSCHLI Ah, I see. You wrote something on it! That was rash.

RAINA [*vexed almost to tears*] Oh, to have done such a thing for you, who care no more – except to laugh at me – oh! Are you sure nobody has touched it?

BLUNTSCHLI Well, I can't be quite sure! You see, I couldn't carry it about with me all the time. one can't take much luggage on active service!

RAINA What did you do with it?

BLUNTSCHLI When I got through to Pirot I had to put it in safe keeping somehow I thought of the railway cloak room, but thats the surest place to get looted in modern warfare So I pawned it

RAINA Pawned it!!!

BLUNTSCHLI I know it doesnt sound nice but it was much the safest plan I redeemed it the day before yesterday Heaven only knows whether the pawnbroker cleared out the pockets or not

RAINA [*furious throwing the words right into his face*] You have a low shopkeeping mind You think of things that would never come into a gentleman's head

BLUNTSCHLI [*phlegmatically*] Thats the Swiss national character, dear lady [*He returns to the table*]

RAINA Oh, I wish I had never met you [*She flounces away, and sits at the window fuming*]

Louka comes in with a heap of letters and telegrams on her salver, and crosses, with her bold free gait, to the table Her left sleeve is looped up to the shoulder with a brooch, shewing her naked arm, with a broad gilt bracelet covering the bruise

LOUKA [*to Bluntschli*] For you [*She empties the salver with a fling on to the table*] The messenger is waiting [*She is determined not to be civil to an enemy, even if she must bring him his letters*]

BLUNTSCHLI [*to Raina*] Will you excuse me the last postal delivery that reached me was three weeks ago These are the subsequent accumulations Four telegrams a week old [*He opens one*] Oho! Bad news!

RAINA [*rising and advancing a little remorsefully*] Bad news?

BLUNTSCHLI My father's dead [*He looks at the telegram with his lips pursed, musing on the unexpected change in his arrangements Louka crosses herself hastily*]

RAINA Oh, how very sad!

BLUNTSCHLI Yes I shall have to start for home in an hour He has left a lot of big hotels behind him to be looked after [*He takes up a fat letter in a long blue envelope*] Here's a whacking letter from the family solicitor [*He puts out the enclosures and glances over them*] Great Heavens! Seventy! Two

hundred! [*In a crescendo of dismay*] Four hundred! Four thousand!! Nine thousand six hundred!! What on earth am I to do with them all?

RAINA [*timidly*] Nine thousand hotels?

BLUNTSCHLI. Hotels! nonsense If you only knew! Oh, it's too ridiculous! Excuse me: I must give my fellow orders about starting [*He leaves the room hastily, with the documents in his hand*]

LOUKA [*knowing instinctively that she can annoy Raina by disparaging Bluntschli*] He has not much heart, that Swiss. He has not a word of grief for his poor father.

RAINA [*bitterly*] Grief! A man who has been doing nothing but killing people for years! What does he care? What does any soldier care? [*She goes to the door, restraining her tears with difficulty*]

LOUKA Major Saranoff has been fighting too; and he has plenty of heart left. [*Raina, at the door, draws herself up haughtily and goes out*]. Aha! I thought you wouldnt get much feeling out of your soldier. [*She is following Raina when Nicola enters with an armful of logs for the stove*]

NICOLA [*grinning amorously at her*] Ive been trying all the afternoon to get a minute alone with you, my girl [*His countenance changes as he notices her arm*]. Why, what fashion is that of wearing your sleeve, child?

LOUKA [*proudly*] My own fashion.

NICOLA Indeed! If the mistress catches you, she'll talk to you [*He puts the logs down, and seats himself comfortably on the ottoman*].

LOUKA. Is that any reason why you should take it on yourself to talk to me?

NICOLA Come! dont be so contrary with me. Ive some good news for you [*She sits down beside him. He takes out some paper money Louka, with an eager gleam in her eyes, tries to snatch it; but he shifts it quickly to his left hand, out of her reach*] See! a twenty leva bill! Sergius gave me that, out of pure swagger. A fool and his money are soon parted Theres ten levas more. The Swiss gave me that for backing up the mistress's

and Raina's lies about him. He's no fool, he isn't. You should have heard old Catherine downstairs as polite as you please to me, telling me not to mind the Major being a little impatient, for they knew what a good servant I was – after making a fool and a liar of me before them all! The twenty will go to our savings, and you shall have the ten to spend if you'll only talk to me so as to remind me I'm a human being. I get tired of being a servant occasionally.

LOUKA Yes, sell your manhood for 30 levas, and buy me for 10! [*Rising scornfully*] Keep your money. You were born to be a servant. I was not. When you set up your shop you will only be everybody's servant instead of somebody's servant. [*She goes moodily to the table and seats herself regally in Sergius's chair*]

NICOLA [*picking up his logs, and going to the stove*] Ah, wait till you see. We shall have our evenings to ourselves, and I shall be master in my own house, I promise you. [*He throws the logs down and kneels at the stove*]

LOUKA You shall never be master in mine.

NICOLA [*turning, still on his knees, and squatting down rather forlornly on his calves, daunted by her implacable disdain*] You have a great ambition in you, Louka. Remember, if any luck comes to you, it was I that made a woman of you.

LOUKA You!

NICOLA [*scrambling up and going to her*] Yes, me. Who was it made you give up wearing a couple of pounds of false black hair on your head and reddening your lips and cheeks like any other Bulgarian girl? I did. Who taught you to trim your nails, and keep your hands clean, and be dainty about yourself, like a fine Russian lady? Me. Do you hear that? me! [*She tosses her head defiantly, and he turns away, adding more coolly*] I've often thought that if Raina were out of the way, and you just a little less of a fool and Sergius just a little more of one, you might come to be one of my grandest customers, instead of only being my wife and costing me money.

LOUKA I believe you would rather be my servant than my

husband. You would make more out of me. Oh, I know that soul of yours.

NICOLA [*going closer to her for greater emphasis*] Never you mind my soul; but just listen to my advice. If you want to be a lady, your present behaviour to me wont do at all, unless when we're alone. It's too sharp and impudent; and impudence is a sort of familiarity: it shows affection for me. And dont you try being high and mighty with me, either. You're like all country girls you think it's genteel to treat a servant the way I treat a stableboy. That's only your ignorance; and dont you forget it. And dont be so ready to defy everybody. Act as if you expected to have your own way, not as if you expected to be ordered about. The way to get on as a lady is the same as the way to get on as a servant: you've got to know your place. That's the secret of it. And you may depend on me to know my place if you get promoted. Think over it, my girl. I'll stand by you. one servant should always stand by another.

LOUKA [*rising impatiently*] Oh, I must behave in my own way. You take all the courage out of me with your cold-blooded wisdom. Go and put those logs on the fire: that's the sort of thing you understand.

Before Nicola can retort, Sergius comes in. He checks himself a moment on seeing Louka; then goes to the stove

SERGIUS [*to Nicola*] I am not in the way of your work, I hope.

NICOLA [*in a smooth, elderly manner*] Oh no, sir. thank you kindly. I was only speaking to this foolish girl about her habit of running up here to the library whenever she gets a chance, to look at the books. That's the worst of her education, sir: it gives her habits above her station. [*To Louka*] Make that table tidy, Louka, for the Major. [*He goes out sedately*].

Louka, without looking at Sergius, pretends to arrange the papers on the table. He crosses slowly to her, and studies the arrangement of her sleeve reflectively.

SERGIUS. Let me see. is there a mark there? [*He turns up the bracelet and sees the bruise made by his grasp. She stands motionless,*

not looking at him fascinated, but on her guard] Ffff! Does it hurt?

LOUKA Yes

SERGIUS Shall I cure it?

LOUKA [*instantly withdrawing herself proudly, but still not looking at him*] No You cannot cure it now

SERGIUS [*masterfully*] Quite sure? [*He makes a movement as if to take her in his arms*]

LOUKA Dont trifle with me, please An officer should not trifle with a servant

SERGIUS [*indicating the bruise with a merciless stroke of his forefinger*] That was no trifle, Louka

LOUKA [*flinching, then looking at him for the first time*] Are you sorry?

SERGIUS [*with measured emphasis, folding his arms*] I am never sorry

LOUKA [*wistfully*] I wish I could believe a man could be as unlike a woman as that I wonder are you really a brave man?

SERGIUS [*unaffectedly, relaxing his attitude*] Yes I am a brave man My heart jumped like a woman's at the first shot, but in the charge I found that I was brave Yes that at least is real about me

LOUKA Did you find in the charge that the men whose fathers are poor like mine were any less brave than the men who are rich like you

SERGIUS [*with bitter levity*] Not a bit They all slashed and cursed and yelled like heroes Psha! the courage to rage and kill is cheap I have an English bull terrier who has as much of that sort of courage as the whole Bulgarian nation, and the whole Russian nation at its back But he lets my groom thrash him, all the same Thats your soldier all over! No, Louka your poor men can cut throats, but they are afraid of their officers, they put up with insults and blows, they stand by and see one another punished like children aye, and help to do it when they are ordered And the officers!!! Well [*with a short harsh laugh*] I am an officer Oh, [*fervently*]

give me the man who will defy to the death any power on earth or in heaven that sets itself up against his own will and conscience. he alone is the brave man

LOUKA. How easy it is to talk! Men never seem to me to grow up they all have schoolboy's ideas. You dont know what true courage is

SERGIUS [*ironically*] Indeed! I am willing to be instructed. [*He sits on the ottoman, sprawling magnificently*].

LOUKA Look at me! how much am I allowed to have my own will? I have to get your room ready for you to sweep and dust, to fetch and carry. How could that degrade me if it did not degrade you to have it done for you? But [*with subdued passion*] if I were Empress of Russia, above everyone in the world, then! Ah then, though according to you I could shew no courage at all, you should see, you should see

SERGIUS What would you do, most noble Empress?

LOUKA I would marry the man I loved, which no other queen in Europe has the courage to do If I loved you, though you would be as far beneath me as I am beneath you, I would dare to be the equal of my inferior. Would you dare as much if you loved me? No if you felt the beginnings of love for me you would not let it grow. You would not dare you would marry a rich man's daughter because you would be afraid of what other people would say of you.

SERGIUS [*bounding up*] You lie. it is not so, by all the stars! If I loved you, and I were the Czar himself, I would set you on the throne by my side You know that I love another woman, a woman as high above you as heaven is above earth. And you are jealous of her

LOUKA I have no reason to be She will never marry you now The man I told you of has come back She will marry the Swiss

SERGIUS [*recoiling*] The Swiss!

LOUKA A man worth ten of you Then you can come to me; and I will refuse you You are not good enough for me. [*She turns to the door*]

SERGIUS [*springing after her and catching her fiercely in his arms*] I will kill the Swiss, and afterwards I will do as I please with you

LOUKA [*in his arms, passive and steadfast*] The Swiss will kill you, perhaps He has beaten you in love He may beat you in war

SERGIUS [*tormentedly*] Do you think I believe that she – she! whose worst thoughts are higher than your best ones, is capable of trifling with another man behind my back?

LOUKA Do you think she would believe the Swiss if he told her now that I am in your arms?

SERGIUS [*releasing her in despair*] Damnation! Oh, damnation! Mockery! mockery everywhere! everything I think is mocked by everything I do [*He strikes himself frantically on the breast*] Coward! liar! fool! Shall I kill myself like a man, or live and pretend to laugh at myself? [*She again turns to go*] Louka! [*She stops near the door*] Remember you belong to me

LOUKA [*turning*] What does that mean? An insult?

SERGIUS [*commandingly*] It means that you love me, and that I have had you here in my arms, and will perhaps have you there again. Whether that is an insult I neither know nor care take it as you please But [*vehemently*] I will not be a coward and a trifler If I choose to love you, I dare marry you, in spite of all Bulgaria If these hands ever touch you again, they shall touch my affianced bride

LOUKA We shall see whether you dare keep your word And take care I will not wait long

SERGIUS [*again folding his arms and standing motionless in the middle of the room*] Yes we shall see And you shall wait my pleasure

Bluntschli, much preoccupied, with his papers still in his hand, enters, leaving the door open for Louka to go out He goes across to the table, glancing at her as he passes Sergius, without altering his resolute attitude, watches him steadily Louka goes out, leaving the door open

BLUNTSCHLI [*absently, sitting at the table as before, and putting*

down his papers] Thats a remarkable looking young woman.
 SERGIUS [*gravely, without moving*] Captain Bluntschli.
 BLUNTSCHLI. Eh?

SERGIUS. You have deceived me. You are my rival. I brook no rivals. At six o'clock I shall be in the drilling-ground on the Klissoura road, alone, on horseback, with my sabre. Do you understand?

BLUNTSCHLI [*staring, but sitting quite at his ease*] Oh, thank you: thats a cavalry man's proposal. I'm in the artillery; and I have the choice of weapons. If I go, I shall take a machine gun. And there shall be no mistake about the cartridges this time.

SERGIUS [*flushing, but with deadly coldness*] Take care, sir. It is not our custom in Bulgaria to allow invitations of that kind to be trifled with.

BLUNTSCHLI [*warmly*] Pooh! dont talk to me about Bulgaria. You dont know what fighting is. But have it your own way. Bring your sabre along I'll meet you.

SERGIUS [*fiercely delighted to find his opponent a man of spirit*] Well said, Switzer. Shall I lend you my best horse?

BLUNTSCHLI. No: damn your horse! thank you all the same, my dear fellow. [*Raina comes in, and hears the next sentence*] I shall fight you on foot. Horseback's too dangerous, I dont want to kill you if I can help it.

RAINA [*hurrying forward anxiously*] I have heard what Captain Bluntschli said, Sergius You are going to fight Why? [*Sergius turns away in silence, and goes to the stove, where he stands watching her as she continues, to Bluntschli*] What about?

BLUNTSCHLI I dont know. he hasnt told me Better not interfere, dear young lady No harm will be done Ive often acted as sword instructor. He wont be able to touch me, and I'll not hurt him. It will save explanations In the morning I shall be off home, and youll never see me or hear of me again. You and he will then make it up and live happily ever after.

RAINA [*turning away deeply hurt, almost with a sob in her voice*] I never said I wanted to see you again.

SERGIUS [*striding forward*] Ha! That is a confession

RAINA [*haughtily*] What do you mean?

SERGIUS You love that man!

RAINA [*scandalized*] Sergius!

SERGIUS You allow him to make love to you behind my back, just as you treat me as your affianced husband behind his Bluntschli you knew our relations, and you deceived me It is for that I call you to account, not for having received favors I never enjoyed

BLUNTSCHLI [*jumping up indignantly*] Stuff! Rubbish! I have received no favors Why, the young lady doesnt even know whether I'm married or not

RAINA [*forgetting herself*] Oh! [*Collapsing on the ottoman*] Are you?

SERGIUS You see the young lady's concern, Captain Bluntschli Denial is useless You have enjoyed the privilege of being received in her own room, late at night -

BLUNTSCHLI [*interrupting him pepperily*] Yes, you blockhead! she received me with a pistol at her head Your cavalry were at my heels I'd have blown out her brains if she'd uttered a cry

SERGIUS [*taken aback*] Bluntschli! Raina is this true?

RAINA [*rising in wrathful majesty*] Oh, how dare you, how dare you?

BLUNTSCHLI Apologize, man apologize [*He resumes his seat at the table*]

SERGIUS [*with the old measured emphasis, folding his arms*] I never apologize!

RAINA [*passionately*] This is the doing of that friend of yours, Captain Bluntschli It is he who is spreading this horrible story about me [*She walks about excitedly*]

BLUNTSCHLI No he's dead Burnt alive

RAINA [*stopping, shocked*] Burnt alive!

BLUNTSCHLI Shot in the hip in a woodyard Couldnt drag himself out Your fellows' shells set the timber on fire and burnt him, with half a dozen other poor devils in the same predicament

RAINA. How horrible!

SERGIUS. And how ridiculous! Oh, war! war! the dream of patriots and heroes! A fraud, Bluntschli. A hollow sham, like love.

RAINA [*outraged*] Like love! You say that before me!

BLUNTSCHLI Come, Saranoff. that matter is explained

SERGIUS A hollow sham, I say. Would you have come back here if nothing had passed between you except at the muzzle of your pistol? Raina is mistaken about your friend who was burnt. He was not my informant.

RAINA Who then? [*Suddenly guessing the truth*] Ah, Louka! my maid! my servant! You were with her this morning all that time after – after – Oh, what sort of god is this I have been worshipping! [*He meets her gaze with sardonic enjoyment of her disenchantment. Angered all the more, she goes closer to him, and says, in a lower, intenser tone*] Do you know that I looked out of the window as I went upstairs, to have another sight of my hero, and I saw something I did not understand then. I know now that you were making love to her.

SERGIUS [*with grim humor*] You saw that?

RAINA Only too well [*She turns away, and throws herself on the divan under the centre window, quite overcome*].

SERGIUS [*cynically*] Raina. our romance is shattered. Life's a farce

BLUNTSCHLI [*to Raina, whimsically*] You see he's found himself out now

SERGIUS [*going to him*] Bluntschli. I have allowed you to call me a blockhead. You may now call me a coward as well. I refuse to fight you. Do you know why?

BLUNTSCHLI No; but it doesn't matter. I didn't ask the reason when you cried on, and I don't ask the reason now, that you cry off. I'm a professional soldier: I fight when I have to, and am very glad to get out of it when I haven't to.

You're only an amateur. you think fighting's an amusement

SERGIUS [*sitting down at the table, nose to nose with him*] You shall hear the reason all the same, my professional. The reason is that it takes two men – real men – men of heart,

blood and honor – to make a genuine combat I could no more fight with you than I could make love to an ugly woman Youve no magnetism youre not a man youre a machine

BLUNTSCHLI [*apologetically*] Quite true, quite true I always was that sort of chap I'm very sorry

SERGIUS Psha!

BLUNTSCHLI But now that youve found that life isnt a farce, but something quite sensible and serious, what further obstacle is there to your happiness?

RAINA [*rising*] You are very solicitous about my happiness and his Do you forget his new love – Louka? It is not you that he must fight now, but his rival, Nicola

SERGIUS Rival! [*bounding half across the room*]

RAINA Dont you know that theyre engaged?

SERGIUS Nicola! Are fresh abysses opening? Nicola!

RAINA [*sarcastically*] A shockingsacrifice, isnt it? Such beauty! such intellect! such modesty! wasted on a middle-aged servant man Really, Sergius, you cannot stand by and allow such a thing It would be unworthy of your chivalry

SERGIUS [*losing all self-control*] Viper! Viper! [*He rushes to and fro, raging*]

BLUNTSCHLI Look here, Saranoff youre getting the worst of this

RAINA [*getting angrier*] Do you realize what he has done, Captain Bluntschli? He has set this girl as a spy on us, and her reward is that he makes love to her

SERGIUS False! Monstrous!

RAINA Monstrous! [*Confronting him*] Do you deny that she told you about Captain Bluntschli being in my room?

SERGIUS No, but –

RAINA [*interrupting*] Do you deny that you were making love to her when she told you?

SERGIUS No, but I tell you –

RAINA [*cutting him short contemptuously*] It is unnecessary to tell us anything more That is quite enough for us [*She turns away from him and sweeps majestically back to the window*]

BLUNTSCHLI [*quietly, as Sergius, in an agony of mortification, sinks on the ottoman, clutching his averted head between his fists*] I told you you were getting the worst of it, Saranoff.

SERGIUS Tiger cat!

RAINA [*running excitedly to Bluntschli*] You hear this man calling me names, Captain Bluntschli?

BLUNTSCHLI. What else can he do, dear lady? He must defend himself somehow. Come [*very persuasively*]. don't quarrel. What good does it do?

Raina, with a gasp, sits down on the ottoman, and after a vain effort to look vexedly at Bluntschli, falls a victim to her sense of humor, and actually leans back babyishly against the writhing shoulder of Sergius.

SERGIUS Engaged to Nicola! Ha! ha! Ah well, Bluntschli, you are right to take this huge imposture of a world coolly

RAINA [*quantly to Bluntschli, with an intuitive guess at his state of mind*] I daresay you think us a couple of grown-up babies, don't you?

SERGIUS [*grinning savagely*] He does. he does. Swiss civilization nursetending Bulgarian barbarism, eh?

BLUNTSCHLI [*blushing*] Not at all, I assure you I'm only very glad to get you two quieted There! there! let's be pleasant and talk it over in a friendly way. Where is this other young lady?

RAINA. Listening at the door, probably.

SERGIUS [*shivering as if a bullet had struck him, and speaking with quiet but deep indignation*] I will prove that that, at least, is a calumny. [*He goes with dignity to the door and opens it. A yell of fury bursts from him as he looks out. He darts into the passage, and returns dragging in Louka, whom he flings violently against the table, exclaiming*] Judge her, Bluntschli. You, the cool impartial man. judge the eavesdropper.

Louka stands her ground, proud and silent.

BLUNTSCHLI [*shaking his head*] I mustnt judge her. I once listened myself outside a tent when there was a mutiny brewing. It's all a question of the degree of provocation. My life was at stake.

LOUKA My love was at stake I am not ashamed

RAINA [*contemptuously*] Your love! Your curiosity, you mean

LOUKA [*facing her and returning her contempt with interest*] My love, stronger than anything you can feel, even for your chocolate cream soldier

SERGIUS [*with quick suspicion, to Louka*] What does that mean?

LOUKA [*fiercely*] It means –

SERGIUS [*interrupting her slightly*] Oh, I remember the ice pudding A paltry taunt, girl!

Major Petkoff enters, in his shirtsleeves

PETKOFF Excuse my shirtsleeves, gentlemen Raina somebody has been wearing that coat of mine I'll swear it Somebody with a differently shaped back It's all burst open at the sleeve Your mother is mending it I wish she'd make haste I shall catch cold [*He looks more attentively at them*] Is anything the matter?

RAINA No [*She sits down at the stove, with a tranquil air*]

SERGIUS Oh no [*He sits down at the end of the table, as at first*]

BLUNTSCHLI [*who is already seated*] Nothing Nothing

PETKOFF [*sitting down on the ottoman in his old place*] That's all right [*He notices Louka*] Anything the matter, Louka?

LOUKA No, sir

PETKOFF [*genially*] That's all right [*He sneezes*] Go and ask your mistress for my coat, like a good girl, will you?

Nicola enters with the coat Louka makes a pretence of having business in the room by taking the little table with the hookah away to the wall near the windows

RAINA [*rising quickly as she sees the coat on Nicola's arm*] Here it is, papa Give it to me, Nicola, and do you put some more wood on the fire [*She takes the coat, and brings it to the Major, who stands up to put it on Nicola attends to the fire*]

PETKOFF [*to Raina, teasing her affectionately*] Aha! Going to be very good to poor old papa just for one day after his return from the wars, eh?

RAINA [*with solemn reproach*] Ah, how can you say that to me, father?

PETKOFF. Well, well, only a joke, little one. Come. give me a kiss [*She kisses him*]. Now give me the coat

RAINA. No: I am going to put it on for you. Turn your back. [*He turns his back and feels behind him with his arms for the sleeves. She dexterously takes the photograph from the pocket and throws it on the table before Bluntschli, who covers it with a sheet of paper under the very nose of Sergius, who looks on amazed, with his suspicions roused in the highest degree. She then helps Petkoff on with his coat*]. There, dear! Now are you comfortable?

PETKOFF. Quite, little love Thanks. [*He sits down, and Raina returns to her seat near the stove*] Oh, by the bye, Ive found something funny. Whats the meaning of this? [*He puts his hand into the picked pocket*] Eh? Hallo! [*He tries the other pocket*]. Well, I could have sworn - ! [*Much puzzled, he tries the breast pocket*]. I wonder - [*trying the original pocket*] Where can it - ? [*He rises, exclaiming*] Your mother's taken it!

RAINA [*very red*] Taken what?

PETKOFF Your photograph, with the inscription: 'Raina, to her Chocolate Cream Soldier a Souvenir.' Now you know theres something more in this than meets the eye; and I'm going to find it out. [*Shouting*] Nicola!

NICOLA [*coming to him*] Sir!

PETKOFF Did you spoil any pastry of Miss Raina's this morning?

NICOLA. You heard Miss Raina say that I did, sir.

PETKOFF I know that, you idiot. Was it true?

NICOLA I am sure Miss Raina is incapable of saying anything that is not true, sir.

PETKOFF. Are you? Then I'm not. [*Turning to the others*] Come do you think I dont see it all? [*He goes to Sergius, and slaps him on the shoulder*]. Sergius. youre the chocolate cream soldier, arnt you?

SERGIUS [*starting up*] I! A chocolate cream soldier! Certainly not.

PETKOFF. Not! [*He looks at them. They are all very serious and very conscious*] Do you mean to tell me that Raina sends things like that to other men?

SERGIUS [*enigmatically*] The world is not such an innocent place as we used to think, Petkoff

BLUNTSCHLI [*rising*] It's all right, Major I'm the chocolate cream soldier [*Petkoff and Sergius are equally astonished*] The gracious young lady saved my life by giving me chocolate creams when I was starving shall I ever forget their flavour! My late friend Stolz told you the story at Pirot I was the fugitive

PETKOFF You! [*He gasps*] Sergius do you remember how those two women went on this morning when we mentioned it? [*Sergius smiles cynically Petkoff confronts Raina severely*] You're a nice young woman, arnt you?

RAINA [*bitterly*] Major Saranoff has changed his mind And when I wrote that on the photograph, I did not know that Captain Bluntschli was married

BLUNTSCHLI [*startled into vehement protest*] I'm not married

RAINA [*with deep reproach*] You said you were

BLUNTSCHLI I did not I positively did not I never was married in my life

PETKOFF [*exasperated*] Raina will you kindly inform me, if I am not asking too much, which of these gentlemen you are engaged to?

RAINA To neither of them This young lady [*introducing Louka, who faces them all proudly*] is the object of Major Saranoff's affections at present

PETKOFF Louka! Are you mad, Sergius? Why, this girl's engaged to Nicola

NICOLA I beg your pardon, sir There is a mistake Louka is not engaged to me

PETKOFF Not engaged to you, you scoundrel! Why, you had twenty-five levas from me on the day of your betrothal, and she had that gilt bracelet from Miss Raina

NICOLA [*with cool unction*] We gave it out so, sir But it was only to give Louka protection She had a soul above her station, and I have been no more than her confidential servant I intend, as you know, sir, to set up a shop later on in Sofia, and I look forward to her custom and recom-

mendation should she marry into the nobility. [*He goes out with impressive discretion, leaving them all staring after him*].

PETKOFF [*breaking the silence*] Well, I am – hm!

SERGIUS. This is either the finest heroism or the most crawling baseness. Which is it, Bluntschli?

BLUNTSCHLI. Never mind whether it's heroism or baseness.

Nicola's the ablest man I've met in Bulgaria. I'll make him manager of a hotel if he can speak French and German.

LOUKA [*suddenly breaking out at Sergius*] I have been insulted by everyone here. You set them the example. You owe me an apology.

Sergius, like a repeating clock of which the spring has been touched, immediately begins to fold his arms.

BLUNTSCHLI [*before he can speak*] It's no use. He never apologizes.

LOUKA Not to you, his equal and his enemy. To me, his poor servant, he will not refuse to apologize.

SERGIUS [*approvingly*] You are right. [*He bends his knee in his grandest manner*] Forgive me.

LOUKA I forgive you. [*She timidly gives him her hand, which he kisses*]. That touch makes me your affianced wife.

SERGIUS [*springing up*] Ah! I forgot that

LOUKA [*coldly*] You can withdraw if you like.

SERGIUS Withdraw! Never! You belong to me. [*He puts his arm about her*].

Catherine comes in and finds Louka in Sergius's arms, with all the rest gazing at them in bewildered astonishment.

CATHERINE. What does this mean?

Sergius releases Louka.

PETKOFF. Well, my dear, it appears that Sergius is going to marry Louka instead of Raina. [*She is about to break out indignantly at him; he stops her by exclaiming testily*] Don't blame me. I've nothing to do with it. [*He retreats to the stove*]

CATHERINE Marry Louka! Sergius: you are bound by your word to us!

SERGIUS [*folding his arms*] Nothing binds me.

BLUNTSCHLI [*much pleased by this piece of common sense*] Sara-

noff your hand My congratulations These heroics of yours have their practical side after all [*To Louka*] Gracious young lady the best wishes of a good Republican! [*He kisses her hand, to Raina's great disgust, and returns to his seat*]

CATHERINE Louka you have been telling stories

LOUKA I have done Raina no harm

CATHERINE [*haughtily*] Raina!

Raina, equally indignant, almost snorts at the liberty

LOUKA I have a right to call her Raina she calls me Louka

I told Major Saranoff she would never marry him if the Swiss gentleman came back

BLUNTSCHLI [*rising, much surprised*] Hallo!

LOUKA [*turning to Raina*] I thought you were fonder of him than of Sergius You know best whether I was right

BLUNTSCHLI What nonsense! I assure you, my dear Major, my dear Madame, the gracious young lady simply saved my life, nothing else She never cared two straws for me Why, bless my heart and soul, look at the young lady and look at me She, rich, young, beautiful, with her imagination full of fairy princes and noble natures and cavalry charges and goodness knows what! And I, a commonplace Swiss soldier who hardly knows what a decent life is after fifteen years of barracks and battles a vagabond, a man who has spoiled all his chances in life through an incurably romantic disposition, a man –

SERGIUS [*starting as if a needle had pricked him and interrupting Bluntschli in incredulous amazement*] Excuse me, Bluntschli what did you say had spoiled your chances in life?

BLUNTSCHLI [*promptly*] An incurably romantic disposition I ran away from home twice when I was a boy I went into the army instead of into my father's business I climbed the balcony of this house when a man of sense would have dived into the nearest cellar I came sneaking back here to have another look at the young lady when any other man of my age would have sent the coat back –

PETKOFF My coat!

BLUNTSCHLI – yes thats the coat I mean – would have sent

it back and gone quietly home. Do you suppose I am the sort of fellow a young girl falls in love with? Why, look at our ages! I'm thirty-four! I don't suppose the young lady is much over seventeen. [*This estimate produces a marked sensation, all the rest turning and staring at one another. He proceeds innocently*] All that adventure which was life or death to me, was only a schoolgirl's game to her – chocolate creams and hide and seek. Here's the proof! [*He takes the photograph from the table*] Now, I ask you, would a woman who took the affair seriously have sent me this and written on it 'Raina, to her Chocolate Cream Soldier a Souvenir'? [*He exhibits the photograph triumphantly, as if it settled the matter beyond all possibility of refutation*].

PETKOFF That's what I was looking for. How the deuce did it get there? [*He comes from the stove to look at it, and sits down on the ottoman*].

BLUNTSCHLI [*to Raina, complacently*] I have put everything right, I hope, gracious young lady.

RAINA [*going to the table to face him*] I quite agree with your account of yourself. You are a romantic idiot [*Bluntschli is unspeakably taken aback*]. Next time, I hope you will know the difference between a schoolgirl of seventeen and a woman of twenty-three.

BLUNTSCHLI [*stupefied*] Twenty-three!

Raina snaps the photograph contemptuously from his hand, tears it up; throws the pieces in his face; and sweeps back to her former place.

SERGIUS [*with grim enjoyment of his rival's discomfiture*] Bluntschli my one last belief is gone. Your sagacity is a fraud, like everything else. You have less sense than even I!

BLUNTSCHLI [*overwhelmed*] Twenty-three! Twenty-three!! [*He considers*]. Hm! [*Swiftly making up his mind and coming to his host*] In that case, Major Petkoff, I beg to propose formally to become a suitor for your daughter's hand, in place of Major Saranoff retired.

RAINA You dare!

BLUNTSCHLI. If you were twenty-three when you said

those things to me this afternoon, I shall take them seriously

CATHERINE [*loftily polite*] I doubt, sir, whether you quite realize either my daughter's position or that of Major Sergius Saranoff, whose place you propose to take. The Petkoffs and the Saranoffs are known as the richest and most important families in the country. Our position is almost historical—we can go back for twenty years.

PETKOFF Oh, never mind that, Catherine [*To Bluntschli*]. We should be most happy, Bluntschli, if it were only a question of your position, but hang it, you know, Raina is accustomed to a very comfortable establishment. Sergius keeps twenty horses.

BLUNTSCHLI But who wants twenty horses? We're not going to keep a circus.

CATHERINE [*severely*] My daughter, sir, is accustomed to a first-rate stable.

RAINA Hush, mother, you're making me ridiculous.

BLUNTSCHLI Oh well, if it comes to a question of an establishment, here goes! [*He darts impetuously to the table, seizes the papers in the blue envelope, and turns to Sergius*]. How many horses did you say?

SERGIUS Twenty, noble Switzer.

BLUNTSCHLI I have two hundred horses [*They are amazed*]. How many carriages?

SERGIUS Three.

BLUNTSCHLI I have seventy. Twenty-four of them will hold twelve inside, besides two on the box, without counting the driver and conductor. How many tablecloths have you?

SERGIUS How the deuce do I know?

BLUNTSCHLI Have you four thousand?

SERGIUS No.

BLUNTSCHLI I have. I have nine thousand six hundred pairs of sheets and blankets, with two thousand four hundred eider-down quilts. I have ten thousand knives and forks, and the same quantity of dessert spoons. I have three

hundred servants. I have six palatial establishments, besides two livery stables, a tea gardens, and a private house. I have four medals for distinguished services; I have the rank of an officer and the standing of a gentleman; and I have three native languages. Shew me any man in Bulgaria that can offer as much!

PETKOFF [*with childish awe*] Are you Emperor of Switzerland?

BLUNTSCHLI My rank is the highest known in Switzerland I am a free citizen

CATHERINE. Then, Captain Bluntschli, since you are my daughter's choice –

RAINA [*mutinously*] He's not.

CATHERINE [*ignoring her*] – I shall not stand in the way of her happiness. [*Petkoff is about to speak*] That is Major Petkoff's feeling also

PETKOFF. Oh, I shall be only too glad. Two hundred horses! Whew!

SERGIUS. What says the lady?

RAINA [*pretending to sulk*] The lady says that he can keep his tablecloths and his omnibuses. I am not here to be sold to the highest bidder. [*She turns her back on him*].

BLUNTSCHLI. I wont take that answer. I appealed to you as a fugitive, a beggar, and a starving man. You accepted me. You gave me your hand to kiss, your bed to sleep in, and your roof to shelter me.

RAINA. I did not give them to the Emperor of Switzerland.

BLUNTSCHLI. Thats just what I say. [*He catches her by the shoulders and turns her face-to-face with him*]. Now tell us whom you did give them to.

RAINA [*succumbing with a shy smile*] To my chocolate cream soldier.

BLUNTSCHLI [*with a boyish laugh of delight*] Thatll do. Thank you [*He looks at his watch and suddenly becomes businesslike*]. Time's up, Major. Youve managed those regiments so well that youre sure to be asked to get rid of some of the infantry of the Timok division Send them home by way

of Lom Palanka Saranoff dont get married until I come back I shall be here punctually at five in the evening on Tuesday fortnight Gracious ladies [*his heels click*] good evening [*He makes them a military bow, and goes*]

SERGIUS What a man! Is he a man!

CANDIDA

1895

CANDIDA

ACT I

A fine morning in October 1894 in the north east quarter of London, a vast district miles away from the London of Mayfair and St James's, and much less narrow, squalid, fetid and airless in its slums. It is strong in unfashionable middle class life wide-streeted, myriad-populated, well served with ugly iron urinals, Radical clubs, and tram lines carrying a perpetual stream of yellow cars, enjoying in its main thoroughfares the luxury of grass-grown 'front gardens' untrodden by the foot of man save as to the path from the gate to the hall door, blighted by a callously endured monotony of miles and miles of unlovely brick houses, black iron railings, stony pavements, slated roofs, and respectably ill dressed or disreputably worse dressed people, quite accustomed to the place, and mostly plodding uninterestedly about somebody else's work. The little energy and eagerness that crop up shew themselves in cockney cupidity and business 'push'. Even the policemen and the chapels are not infrequent enough to break the monotony. The sun is shining cheerfully there is no fog, and though the smoke effectually prevents anything, whether faces and hands or bricks and mortar, from looking fresh and clean, it is not hanging heavily enough to trouble a Londoner.

This desert of unattractiveness has its oasis. Near the outer end of the Hackney Road is a park of 217 acres, fenced in, not by railings, but by a wooden paling, and containing plenty of greensward, trees, a lake for bathers, flower beds which are triumphs of the admired cockney art of carpet gardening, and a sandpit, originally imported from the seaside for the delight of children, but speedily deserted on its becoming a natural vermin preserve for all the petty fauna of Kingsland, Hackney, and Hoxton. A bandstand, an unfurnished forum for religious, anti-religious, and political orators, cricket pitches, a gymnasium, and an old fashioned stone kiosk are among its attractions. Wherever the prospect is bounded by trees or rising green grounds, it is a pleasant place. Where the ground stretches flat to the grey palings, with bricks and mortar, sky signs, crowded chimneys and smoke beyond, the prospect makes it desolate and sordid.

*The best view of Victoria Park is commanded by the front window of St Dominic's Parsonage, from which not a brick is visible. The parsonage is semi-detached, with a front garden and a porch. Visitors go up the flight of steps to the porch: tradespeople and members of the family go down by a door under the steps to the basement, with a breakfast room, used for all meals, in front, and the kitchen at the back. Upstairs, on the level of the hall door, is the drawing room, with its large plate glass window looking out on the park. In this, the only sitting room that can be spared from the children and the family meals, the parson, the Reverend James Mavor Morell, does his work. He is sitting in a strong round backed revolving chair at the end of a long table, which stands across the window, so that he can cheer himself with a view of the park over his left shoulder. At the opposite end of the table, adjoining it, is a little table only half as wide as the other, with a typewriter on it. His typist is sitting at this machine, with her back to the window. The large table is littered with pamphlets, journals, letters, nests of drawers, an office diary, postage scales and the like. A spare chair for visitors having business with the parson is in the middle, turned to his end. Within reach of his hand is a stationery case, and a photograph in a frame. The wall behind him is fitted with bookshelves, on which an adept eye can measure the parson's casuistry and divinity by Maurice's *Theological Essays* and a complete set of Browning's poems, and the reformer's politics by a yellow backed *Progress and Poverty*, *Fabian Essays*, *A Dream of John Ball*, *Marx's Capital*, and half a dozen other literary landmarks in Socialism. Facing him on the other side of the room, near the typewriter, is the door. Further down opposite the fireplace, a bookcase stands on a cellaret, with a sofa near it. There is a generous fire burning; and the hearth, with a comfortable armchair and a black japanned flower-painted coal scuttle at one side, a miniature chair for children on the other, a varnished wooden mantelpiece, with neatly moulded shelves, tiny bits of mirror let into the panels, a travelling clock in a leather case (the inevitable wedding present), and on the wall above a large autotype of the chief figure in Titian's *Assumption of the Virgin*, is very inviting. Altogether the room is the room of a good housekeeper, vanquished, as far as the table is concerned, by an untidy man, but elsewhere mistress of the situation. The furniture, in its ornamental aspect, betrays the*

MORELL. Just like Anarchists not to know that they cant have a parson on Sunday! Tell them to come to church if they want to hear me: it will do them good. Say I can come on Mondays and Thursdays only. Have you the diary there?

PROSERPINE [*taking up the diary*] Yes.

MORELL. Have I any lecture on for next Monday?

PROSERPINE [*referring to the diary*] Tower Hamlets Radical Club.

MORELL Well, Thursday then?

PROSERPINE. English Land Restoration League.

MORELL. What next?

PROSERPINE. Guild of St Matthew on Monday. Independent Labor Party, Greenwich Branch, on Thursday. Monday, Social-Democratic Federation, Mile End Branch Thursday, first Confirmation class. [*Impatiently*] Oh, I'd better tell them you cant come. Theyre only half a dozen ignorant and conceited costermongers without fiveshillings between them.

MORELL [*amused*] Ah; but you see theyre near relatives of mine.

PROSERPINE [*staring at him*] Relatives of yours!

MORELL Yes we have the same father – in Heaven.

PROSERPINE [*relieved*] Oh, is that all?

MORELL [*with a sadness which is a luxury to a man whose voice expresses it so finely*] Ah, you dont believe it. Everybodys says it, nobody believes it: nobody. [*Briskly, getting back to business*] Well, well! Come, Miss Proserpine: cant you find a date for the costers? what about the 25th? That was vacant the day before yesterday.

PROSERPINE [*referring to diary*] Engaged The Fabian Society.

MORELL. Bother the Fabian Society! Is the 28th gone too?

PROSERPINE. City dinner. Youre invited to dine with the Founders' Company.

MORELL Thatll do I'll go to the Hoxton Group of Freedom instead. [*She enters the engagement in silence, with implacable disparagement of the Hoxton Anarchists in every line of her face.*]